Introduction

Muruganar (1890-1973) is widely regarded as being one of the foremost devotees of Bhagavan. He was instrumental in getting Bhagavan to compose the verses that comprise *Ulladu Narpadu* and *Upadesa Undiyar*, two of Bhagavan's major philosophical poems, and he composed thousands of poems of his own that either praised Bhagavan, recorded his teachings or expressed gratitude to Bhagavan for having established him in the Self.

In his earlier life he was known as C. K. Subramania Iyer, although his parents called him Sambamurthi. Before coming to Bhagavan he was a well-respected Tamil scholar who served on a prestigious committee that was compiling the definitive Tamil dictionary. He also worked as a schoolteacher and private tutor.

It was a visit by Dandapani Swami, his father-in-law, that prompted him to go to Tiruvannamalai in September 1923. When Dandapani Swami showed him *Aksharamanamalai*, Bhagavan's 108 verses in praise of Arunachala, Muruganar immediately recognised that Ramana Maharshi was the Guru he had been actively seeking. He decided to pay a visit to Tiruvannamalai and see him. On the way there he composed eleven verses in the Arunachaleswara Temple. Most of the verses, addressed to Bhagavan as Siva, contained pleas for grace. Muruganar has described this first visit and the background that led up to it in two of his poetical compositions:

> 'Will I, an unworthy ignorant one, ever be accepted as a devotee by Lord Siva who, as the Divine Guru with the wealth of grace, showed clearly to the world the greatness of Manikkavachagar? And even if I get such a chance, will I be able to sing of the glories of his grace-showering feet in the same way as *Tiruvachakam* [Manikkavachagar's most famous poetical work]?'
>
> Like many other thoughts that arose in my mind, this thought, a long time ago, appeared and disappeared, like a flash of lightning manifesting in the sky.
>
> Then I heard from devotees who had redeemed themselves by taking as their support the grace of the one at Tiruvannamalai, who is the embodiment of true *jnana*, and who shines as the flame of true *tapas*. When they spoke of the greatness of his grace, they melted in joy. Hearing them, I was lost in admiration and unceasing joy.…
>
> The compassionate Supreme One, who is endowed with *jnana*, then decided in his heart to be my Lord and Master.
>
> There was in me a thirst, an intense longing to subside [into the Self], that was prompted by the thought of the divine feet, which abound in grace. So, like one who, suffering from thirst, comes across a Ganges of cold water, on an auspicious day, a golden day for my thirst, I went [to Ramana Maharshi] with eleven verses that began 'Leaving Mount Kailas…' and met the excellent sage, the *jnana* Guru, the ocean of *mauna*, the bestower of *jnana*.
>
> In the same way that wax melts on encountering fire, on seeing his feet, my mind dissolved and lost its form. Like a calf finding its mother, my heart melted and rejoiced in his feet. The hairs on my body stood on end. Devotion surged in me like an ocean that has seen the full moon. Through the grace of *chitshakti* [the power inherent in consciousness], my soul was in ecstasy.
>
> With an unsteady and quivering voice, I read the eleven verses and placed them at his feet. At that very moment he graciously looked at me with his lotus eyes. From that day on, the praises given out by my impartial tongue belonged only to him.

From the way he bestowed his grace, becoming my Lord and Master, I was completely convinced that he was Siva himself. As my new 'owner', he made my 'I' and 'mine' his own.

Even if I get submerged in the miry mud [of this world], I will not forget the mighty nobility of the bountiful bestower of grace.[1]

In September 1923 Bhagavan was still living in a small thatched hut that had been erected over his mother's *samadhi*. Muruganar felt unsure of the correct way of approaching him, so he remained for some time outside the hut. Bhagavan solved the problem by coming outside and saying '*Enna*?' ['What?']. In Tamil Nadu, this is a standard way of ascertaining what business a new visitor has.

In response to this query Muruganar began to sing the verses that had been composed by him in the temple, but emotion got the better of him. Tears welled up in his eyes and he was unable to proceed.

'Can't you read?' asked Bhagavan. 'Give it to me. I shall read it myself.'

Bhagavan then read out the poem. Up till this time Muruganar had been very particular about annotating his poems with a specific raga or melody, since it was traditional that metres or themes had to be sung in a particular way. After this first encounter with Bhagavan, he was never able to sing his poems again.[2]

Muruganar stayed for several days on this first visit, and during this period he had several ecstatic and visionary experiences. These experiences were so intense, Muruganar felt that if he stayed in the ashram any longer, he might abandon his family life and stay with Bhagavan full-time. Not wanting to leave his mother without any means of support, he went back to his job in Madras.

He returned three months later, in December 1923, with more poems for Bhagavan. One of them was entitled 'Tiruvembavai', which is the name of a very famous poem that Manikkavachagar composed in Adi-annamalai more than a thousand years ago. Muruganar's version began with the words, 'Let us bathe in and sing the glories of Annamalai Ramana who bestows his grace through his eyes...'.

Siva had appeared before Manikkavachagar in the form of a human Guru to grant him liberation from bondage. As an expression of his love and gratitude, Manikkavachagar praised the grace and greatness of Siva, his Guru, in *Tiruvachakam*, one of the great classics of Tamil devotional literature. Muruganar had long hoped that Siva would fulfil this same role for him, and that he too would be allowed to sing the praises of Siva in the form of his own Guru. Muruganar had decided that Bhagavan was Siva in the form of his Guru even before he first met him in September 1923. This is clear from the first verse that Muruganar composed in the Arunachaleswara Temple while he was on his way to meet Bhagavan:

Guru Ramana, Siva, as once you left
Mount Kailas and the company of the gods
And came to cool Perunturai to drink in
The sparkling words of Vachagar,
Now again you have come to fair Aruna town
Wishing to hearken to this fellow's puerile words.[3]

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[1] *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*, 'Origin of the work', lines 1-16, and *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*, '*Tiruvandappahudi'*, lines 49-80.

[2] This elaboration of the first meeting was given by Muruganar to V. Ganesan, who recorded it in 'Obeisance to the Poet-saint: Muruganar'. See *The Mountain Path*, 1973, pp. 202-3. The text of the introduction up to this point has been taken from *The Power of the Presence, Volume Two*, pp. 97-99.

[3] *Homage to the Presence of Sri Ramana*, (verse 184 of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*) tr. K. Swaminathan.

‘Vachagar’ is Manikkavachagar, and Perunturai was the coastal port in Tamil Nadu where Siva chose to manifest in a human form for him.

When Muruganar showed up at Ramanasramam with a poem in praise of Bhagavan that had the name of one of Manikkavachagar’s most famous works, it was clear that Muruganar had begun to fulfil his long-held desire of having a relationship with Bhagavan that was similar to that which Manikkavachagar enjoyed with Siva. Sadhu Om has described what happened next:

> He [Muruganar] one day composed his ‘Tiruvembavai’ beginning with the words ‘*Annamalai Ramanan*’. Seeing that the verses of that song were replete with many sublime features similar to Manikkavachagar’s *Tiruvachakam*, Sri Bhagavan playfully asked, ‘Can you sing like Manikkavachagar?’ Though Sri Muruganar took these words to be a divine command from his Guru, he prayed to him, ‘Where is Manikkavachagar’s divine experience of true *jnana*, and where is my state of *ajnana*? Only if Bhagavan removes my *ajnana* by his grace will it be possible for me to sing like Manikkavachagar; by the mere talent of this ego, how is it possible to sing like him?’
>
> Referring to the grace which Sri Bhagavan bestowed on him the moment he prayed thus, Sri Muruganar sings in the ‘Nul Varalaru’ of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*:
>
>> ...I said, ‘Where is my ignorant mind, which is like an owl blind to the bright sunlight, and which is darker than even the darkest darkness, and where is his experience of Self [*atmanubhuti*] which surges as true *jnana* devoid of dark delusion? To compare me with him is like comparing a firefly with the sun!’ As I said thus I languished, and as I languished that Lord who shines in my heart stirred my mind and made it blossom by his grace, and thus without my doing, he composed the work *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* so that his true glory should flourish and shine exalted.
>
> Thus, becoming a target of Sri Bhagavan’s divine love, Sri Muruganar was transformed into an exalted divine poet. Just as Lord Siva made Manikkavachagar sing *Tiruvachakam*, having bestowed upon him *atmanubhuti*, so Sri Bhagavan made Muruganar sing *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* like *Tiruvachakam* having in a single moment stirred his mind by his grace and having thereby bestowed upon him that same *anubhuti*.[4]

The first edition of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* was published in January 1933. Though it contained over 1,200 verses, there was an important omission. *Tiruvachakam* begins with a ninety-five-line poem entitled ‘Siva Puranam’ in which Manikkavachagar praises Siva, but *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* had no equivalent poem as an introduction. Kanakamma has described how this lacuna was remedied:

> In the first edition of *Ramana Sannidhi Murai* there was no poem corresponding to ‘Siva Puranam’ of *Tiruvachakam*. Since this work was patterned on *Tiruvachakam*, it seemed incomplete to that extent. So Muruganar started composing a poem on the same lines. His inspired pen quickly wrote two hundred lines. At this stage a doubt arose in his mind as to what would be the appropriate title for this [work]. The obvious title could be ‘Siva Puranam’, since Siva’s name is dear to his

[4] *Ramana’s Muruganar*, pp. 57-8.

> devotees and Ramana was the embodiment of Lord Siva. But the verses were extolling the glory of the Lord as Ramana. So why not call it 'Ramana Puranam'? Thus tossed by doubt Muruganar left the place, leaving the lines at Ramana's feet.
>
> When he returned in the evening Ramana handed back the poems. A great surprise was in store for Muruganar. Ramana had distinctly written 'Ramana Puranam' not only at the top of the work but also at the top of each and every page. He had not stopped with that. He had himself composed three hundred more lines and completed the work....
>
> When the second edition of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* was [about to be] published these verses were also added. Muruganar had included a footnote to indicate that the first two hundred lines had been composed by him and the remaining three hundred by Bhagavan. After correcting the proof he handed over the matter to Ramana. While going through it Ramana saw the footnote and remarked, 'Are only these [lines] written by Bhagavan?' Muruganar at once saw his error. Were not the earlier ones too a product of Ramana's grace? He at once prostrated to Bhagavan and with profuse tears said 'Nothing is written by me. Everything flows from your grace.' He then promptly deleted the footnote.[5]

'Ramana Puranam' was completed in early 1938,[6] and it was included in the second edition of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* that was published in April 1939 by Ramanapadananda, a devotee who undertook the responsibility of publishing most of the poetry that Muruganar wrote during Bhagavan's lifetime.

The concluding portion of 'Ramana Puranam', a section that runs approximately from line 233 to 540, contains teachings, written by Bhagavan himself, that have never before been published in English. A partial translation of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* was published by Sri Ramanasramam several years ago,[7] but it did not contain either 'Ramana Puranam' or some of the other longer poems that appeared in the original work.

We are giving the whole work here, along with many explanatory notes that we hope will add useful extra information and shed light on some of the more obscure passages. A complete and new translation of 'Siva Puranam' has also been given so that readers can compare the two works.

The translation, editing and annotations have been done by Robert Butler, T. V. Venkatasubramanian and David Godman.

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5 *Ramana's Muruganar*, pp. 12-13.

6 A concluding *venba* verse gives the date of its first reading as February 8th, 1938.

7 *Homage to the Presence of Sri Ramana*, translated by Prof. K. Swaminathan, 1994.

Ramana Puranam

A puranam *is an ancient story. The title of the work can therefore be roughly translated as 'Recounting the Ancient Glory of Ramana'. While he is telling his tale and simultaneously singing the praises of his Guru, Muruganar takes the position that the same Siva who took the form of Manikkavachagar's Guru took a human form again in order to bestow his grace on him.*

The subtitle of 'Siva Puranam' – 'The Eternal Nature of Lord Siva, Enduring Through the Ages' – is therefore appropriate for this work as well since it includes praise of the transcendent unmanifest Siva, Sivam, *praise of the Siva who performed the various heroic deeds that are recorded in the* Puranas, *and extensive portions that sing the glories of that same Siva who took the form of Ramana Maharshi in order to bestow liberation on devotees.*

The original Tamil poem of 'Ramana Puranam' is a single verse comprising 540 lines. The line numbers are given on the left in bold type.

1-2 Long live the mantra '*Namo Ramanaya*',
for the benefit [of all living beings].
Long live the fragrant lotus feet of the True One,
who releases us from [our ignorance]!

The beginning of the work echoes the first two lines of 'Siva Puranam':

Long live [the mantra] Nama Sivaya*! Long live the feet of the Master!*
Long live the feet that never, even for an eye's blink, leave my heart!

'Namo Ramanaya' *means 'Obeisance to Ramana' and '*Nama Sivaya*', the sacred mantra of all Saivas, means, 'Obeisance to Siva'.*

3-8 He it was who

as I suffered in the whirl [of birth and death]
forgetting the inescapable reality of the beginningless link
between the head [the *jiva*] and the foot [the Self],

inspired in me, wretched cur that I was,
the madness of devotion.
He removed the defect of the wandering ego-mind,
shaped me into a comely form
through the purification [of my consciousness],
kindled the flame [of *jnana*] for my salvation's sake,
made me perform the fire-sacrifice of *jnana*
through the observance of devout austerities,
bathed me in his blissful gaze [at the sacrifice's end]
and became my Lord and Master.

When one or more lines are indented, it indicates that a clause or a series of clauses are qualifying the subject or last word of the preceding unindented line. When the text reverts to the

left-hand margin, there is a continuation from the previous unindented line.

The 'madness of devotion' is not to be viewed as a negative quality since it removes the defect of attachment to the world. Bhagavan makes this clear in Aksharamanamalai*, verse 66:*

> *With madness for you, you have freed me from madness [for the world]. Grant me now the cure for all madness, O Arunachala!*

9-12 [At one time] the Lord,
the sight of whom is ambrosia to the eye,
and upon whom even the celestials
eagerly seek to feast their gaze,
was enthroned in royal estate
upon Mount Kailash with his consort Uma,
delighting the eyes
of the assembled eighteen hosts of heaven.

Having begun his work by praising his Guru Ramana and by giving a description of the effect that Bhagavan's grace had on him, Muruganar now moves on to a section in which he summarises some key events from the life of Manikkavachagar. It starts with a scene in Siva Loka in which Siva is about to take the decision to manifest on earth as Manikkavachagar's Guru.

Siva first summoned Nandi, his divine vehicle, and ordered him to take birth in the form of the saint, Manikkavachagar:

13-14 'Go', he said [to Nandi], 'learn, practise and demonstrate
the nature of lofty and surpassing divine love [*parabhakti*],
so that those who are spiritually mature may know it
and reap its benefits.'

15-16 Thus did he speak,
he who bears an eye upon his forehead,
he whose sole intent is to bestow
the bliss of his grace upon [all] *jivas*.

17-20 Thereupon, without leaving the divine presence,
that adept of *sahaja nishta*, the drum-master, divine Nandi,

who, knowing well that the supreme Lord
was the reality of his own existence,

became possessed of a devotion that transcended duality
and transformed himself into the form of Manikkavachagar.

Sahaja nishta *is abidance in the natural state of the Self.*

*In one of Appar's poems (*Tevaram *3035 in the 6th* Tirumurai*) the name Nandikeswara is qualified by the word '*vachaka*'. Though it probably means 'who plays on the drum', some commentators have taken this line to be an indication that Nandi incarnated as Manikkavachagar. This interpretation became a popular belief, but most scholars no longer believe that this Appar verse contains a reference to Manikkavachagar since it is now accepted that Appar lived and wrote in the sixth century AD, whereas Manikkavachagar probably lived about three hundred years later.*

Ramana Maharshi summarised the main events of Manikkavachagar's life for Suri

Nagamma in September 1947:

Manikkavachagar was born in a village called Vaadavur (Vaatapuri) in Pandya Desha. Because of that people used to call him Vaadavurar. He was put to school very early. He read all the religious books, absorbed the lessons therein, and became noted for his devotion to Siva, as also his kindness to living beings. Having heard about him, the Pandya king sent for him and made him his prime minister and conferred on him the title of Thennavan Brahmarayan, i.e., 'Premier among Brahmins of the South'. Though he performed the duties of a minister with tact and integrity, he had no desire for material happiness. His mind was always absorbed in spiritual matters. Feeling convinced that for the attainment of jnana*, the grace of a Guru was essential, he kept on making enquiries about it.*

Once the Pandya king ordered the minister to purchase some good horses and bring them to him. As he was already in search of a Guru, Manikkavachagar felt that it was a good opportunity and started with his retinue carrying with him the required amount of gold. As his mind was intensely seeking a Guru, he visited all the temples on the way. While doing so he reached a village called Tirupperundurai. Having realised the maturity of the mind of Manikkavachagar, Parameswara assumed the form of a schoolteacher and for about a year before that had been teaching poor children in the village seated on a street pial near the temple. He was taking his meal in the house of his pupils every day by turn. He ate only cooked green vegetables. He was anxiously awaiting the arrival of Manikkavachagar. By the time Manikkavachagar actually came, Iswara assumed the shape of a Siddha Purusha *[realised soul] with many* sannyasis *around him and was seated under a* kurundai *[yellow amanth] tree within the compound of the temple. Vaadavurar came to the temple, had* darshan *of the Lord in it, and while going round the temple by way of* pradakshina*, saw the* Siddha Purusha*. He was thrilled at the sight, tears welled up in his eyes and his heart jumped with joy. Spontaneously his hands went up his head in salutation and he fell down at the feet of the Guru like an uprooted tree. Then he got up and prayed that he, a humble being, may also be accepted as a disciple. Having come down solely to bestow grace on him, Iswara, by his look, immediately gave him* jnana upadesa *[initiation into true knowledge].That* upadesa *took deep roots in his heart, and gave him indescribable happiness.. With folded hands and with joyful tears, he went round the guru by way of* pradakshina*, offered salutations, stripped himself of all his official dress and ornaments, placed them near the guru and stood before him with only a* kaupina *on. As he felt like singing in praise of the Guru, he sang some devotional songs, which were like gems. Iswara was pleased, and addressing him as 'Manikkavachaka' [one whose speech is gems] ordered him to remain there itself worshipping him. Then he vanished.*

Fully convinced that he who had blessed him was no other than Iswara himself, Manikkavachagar was stricken with unbearable grief and fell on the ground weeping and saying, 'Oh, my Lord! Why did you go away leaving me here?'

The villagers were very much surprised at this and began a search for the person who was till then working in their village as a schoolteacher, but could not find him anywhere. Then they realised that it was the Lord's leela*. Some time later, Manikkavachagar got over his grief, decided to act according to the injunctions of Iswara, sent away his retinue to Madurai, spent all the gold with him on the temple*

and stayed there alone.[1]

This final act, and the motivation behind it, are alluded to in the next five lines of 'Ramana Puranam'.

21-26 The love of that devotee,
which had endured from birth to birth,
suddenly and swiftly flared up like a kindled flame,
and in that ecstatic state, in which he was conscious of nought
save the feet [of the Lord],
which guided him on the path to salvation,
he considered that the supreme purpose
of the hoard of virtuously accumulated treasure

which the king of the land
that is ennobled by the harmonious Tamil tongue
had given to him to procure horses

was holy service of the temple
wherein the Lord had manifested
in the form of the Guru.

There are two principal accounts of Manikkavachagar's life: The Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam*, which is an account of the various miraculous deeds that Siva performed in and around the temple of Madurai, and* Tiruvadavur Adigal Puranam*, a poetic recreation of Manikkavachagar's life that was composed several centuries later. Bhagavan is following the earlier account in his narration. The phrase 'virtuously accumulated treasure' is a reference to the* Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam *version, to a verse in which Siva himself tells the king that the money Manikkavachagar donated in an act of love had been acquired through righteous means:*

> *O King whose rule has transcended the way of unrighteousness! Since all your wealth has been accumulated through righteous means, its nature is sacred. Therefore, with delight, the blemishless Manikkavachagar offered the wealth to me and my devotees.*[2]

Bhagavan takes up the story again:

> *Hearing all that had happened, the king immediately sent an order to Manikkavachagar to return to Madurai. But how could he go to the king without the horses? If he wanted to purchase them then, where was the money? Not knowing what to do, he prayed to Lord Siva for help. That night Lord Siva appeared to him in a dream, gave him a priceless gem and said, 'Give this to the king and tell him the horses will come on the day of the Moola star in the month of Sravana'.*
>
> *Startled at that vision he opened his eyes but the Lord was not there. Manikkavachagar was however overjoyed at what had happened. He put on his official dress and went to Madurai. He gave the gem to the king, discussed the*

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[1] The main events in Manikkavachagar's life were narrated by Bhagavan in *Letters from and Recollections of Sri Ramanasramam*, by Suri Nagamma. This extract and all the subsequent stories about Manikkavachagar that were narrated by Bhagavan have been taken from pages 5-12 of this work.

[2] *Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam*, verse 3053.

auspicious time when the horses would be arriving and then was anxiously waiting for the day. He did not however resume his official duties. Though his body was in Madurai, his mind was in Tirupperundurai. He was merely biding his time.

The Pandyan king, however, sent his spies to Perundurai and found out that there were no horses there meant for the king and that all the money meant for their purchase had been spent in the renovation of the temple. So he immediately put Manikkavachagar in prison, making him undergo all the trials and tribulations of jail life.

Muruganar mentions some of these incidents in the next four lines of 'Ramana Puranam':

27-30 On hearing from the king's servants
that the king was demanding his return,
his mind was thrown into confusion
and, seeking refuge at the feet of Lord Sankara,
he explained his predicament.
Whereupon the Lord first provided him with
a brightly sparkling ruby of incalculable worth,
upon seeing which the king's fury turned to joy.

This is how Bhagavan continued with his narrative:

Meanwhile, as originally arranged, on the day of the Moola star, Iswara assumed the guise of a horseman, transformed the jackals of the jungle into horses, and brought them to the king. The king was astonished at this, took delivery of the horses and according to the advice of the keeper of the stables, had them tied up at the same place where all his other horses were kept. He thanked the horseman profusely, and after sending him away with several presents, released Manikkavachagar from jail with profuse apologies.

31-35 [Later] transforming packs of jackals
into horses of illustrious blood-lines,
he [Siva] appeared in the presence of [King] Arimardana Pandiyan,
on account of the austerities he [the king] had performed,
arrayed in the intrinsic beauty
that eclipsed the beauty of rubies and emeralds,
and mounted upon the steed of the Fair Word [the *Vedas*].
Joyfully accepting the king's salutation,
he handed over the reins [of the horses], saying: 'Pray, take [them].'

This was not the end of the drama. As Bhagavan explains in the next portion of the story, the transformation of the jackals was only temporary.

The same night the new horses changed into their real forms, killed all the horses in the stables, ate them, created similar havoc in the city, and fled. The king grew very angry, branded Manikkavachagar as a trickster and put him back in jail. Soon, in accordance with Iswara's orders, the waters of the River Vaigai rose in floods and the whole of the city of Madurai was under water. Alarmed at that, the king assembled all the people and ordered them to raise the bunds of the river. For the purpose, he ordered that every citizen should do a certain amount of work with a threat of dire consequences should he fail to do his allotted work.

36-40 That very day, at dead of night,
those horses, reverting to the form of jackals,
ran howling through the city, causing much distress.
Furious with the saint, the king cried out:
'Do you know who it is you have tried to deceive?'
When, burning with rage, the king cruelly tortured him,
the water of the Vaigai River rose in flood
and rushed toward the city [Madurai].

This flood, a leela *of Siva, brought a new character into the story. Bhagavan takes up the story again:*

> *There was in Madurai an old woman by name Pittuvani Ammaiyar. She was a pious devotee of Lord Siva. She was living alone earning her livelihood by daily preparing and selling* pittu *[sweetened powdered rice pressed into conical shapes]. She had no one to do her allotted work on the river bund nor had she the money to hire a person to do it. She was therefore greatly worried and cried, 'Iswara! What shall I do?'*
>
> *Seeing her helplessness, Iswara came there in the guise of a cooly with a spade on his shoulder and called out, 'Granny, granny, do you want a cooly?'*
>
> *'Yes,' she said, 'but I don't have even a paise in my hand to pay you. What to do?'*
>
> *He said, 'I do not want any money and would be satisfied if you give me some portion of* pittu *to eat. I shall then do the allotted work on the river bund.'*

41-46 In order to quell that flood,
The bliss-bestowing embodiment of Compassion,

> who alleviates the woes of devotees who solicit the Lord's aid
> by bearing them upon his resplendent head,

became a labourer, toiling strenuously
for [a wage of] sweet cakes.
He carried earth upon his head for the old dame Vanti [Pittuvani Ammaiyar],
whose worthiness was such that even the exalted ones,
who have gained the highest spiritual attainment,
might bow down in adoration upon seeing her,
she who, through surrendering, has merged non-dually with him.

Though Siva volunteered to do the work and took payment in advance, he did not seem inclined to contribute much to the anti-flooding project. Bhagavan narrates what happened next:

> *Pleased with that offer, she began making* pittu *but they did not come out in the full shape but were broken. Surprised at this she gave all the bits to the cooly. He ate as many of them as he could and went away, saying that he would attend to the bund-raising work. Surprisingly, the dough with the old woman remained intact even though she had prepared and given bits of the* pittu *to the cooly. The cooly went to the work spot but instead of doing the work, lay down there idly, standing in the way of others doing their work.*
>
> *The king went round to inspect the progress of the work and found that the*

portion allotted to Ammaiyar remained unattended to. On enquiry, his servants told him all the pranks of that cooly.

The king got infuriated, called the cooly and said, 'Instead of doing the allotted work, you are lying down and singing'.

So saying, he hit the cooly on the back with a cane he had in his hand. The blow recoiled not only on the king himself but on all living beings there and all of them suffered the pain on that account. The king immediately realised that the person hit by him was Parameswara himself in the guise of a cooly. The king stood aghast.

Parameswara vanished and soon a voice from the sky said, 'O King! Manikkavachagar is my beloved devotee. I myself did all this to show you his greatness. Seek his protection.'

Soon after hearing that voice, the king went to see Manikkavachagar and on the way he stepped into the house of Pittuvani to see her. By that time she had already got into a vimanam *[a heavenly chariot] and was on her way to Kailash. The king was greatly surprised and saluted her and from there he went straight to Manikkavachagar and fell at his feet. Manikkavachagar lifted him with great respect, and enquired of his welfare.*

The king entreatingly said, 'Please forgive me and rule this kingdom yourself'.

Manikkavachagar, looking at the king, said with kindness, 'Appah! [a term of endearment]. As I have already agreed to serve the Lord, I cannot be bothered with the problems of ruling a kingdom. Please do not mistake me. Rule the kingdom, looking after the welfare of the people. Henceforth you will have nothing to worry about.' So saying, smilingly, he put on the dress of a sannyasin, *and went about visiting holy places, singing the praises of Siva.*

47-50 When, through the miracle of the blow that he [Siva] received,
he revealed himself as the One
whose eightfold form knows no limit,
he made the king realise his minister's greatness,
and caused him [Manikkavachagar] to devote his life to the service of Lord Siva.

51-52 Later, he commanded that ascetic,
rich in the wisdom of embracing *Sivam*,
bidding him repair to Tillai's beautiful Golden Hall.

Tillai's Golden Hall is the shrine in the Chidambaram Temple in which Nataraja performs his cosmic dance.

Muruganar now takes a brief break from his Manikkavachagar narrative in order to say how much Bhagavan enjoyed his poetic works, but then he continues with the final story from Manikkavachagar's life:

53-54 The beauteous Lord, though he transcends thought and speech,
took great pleasure in the compositions [even] of one such as I,
who, with mind intoxicated, was no better than a ghost.

55-60 That most noble saint of Tiruvadavur [Manikkavachagar]
merged indistinguishably with *Sivam*,
who, as his Guru, had reformed and redeemed him,
and from his holy mouth flowered forth
the *Tiruvachakam* and the *Tirukkovaiyar,*
the essence of which is the experience of true *jnana*
that cannot be described,
and which can only be gained through sweet grace
upon the destruction of the powerful bonds of ignorance.

Lines 55-60 refer to the culminating event of Manikkavachagar's life. Bhagavan now completes his story by explaining this event in more detail:

> *He [Manikkavachagar] was going from one place to another until he came to Chidambaram. While witnessing Nataraja's dance he started singing heart-melting songs and stayed in that place itself. Then one day Nataraja, with a view to making people know the greatness of Manikkavachagar and to bless those people with such an excellent collection hymns, went to the house of Manikkavachagar in the night, in the guise of a brahmin.*
>
> *He was received cordially and when asked for the purpose of his visit, the Lord smilingly and with great familiarity asked, 'It seems you have been singing hymns during your visit to the sacred places of pilgrimage and that you are doing it here also. May I hear them? I have been thinking of coming and listening to you for a very long time but could not find the required leisure. That is why I have come here at night. I suppose you don't mind. Can you sing? Do you remember them all?'*
>
> *'There is no need to worry about sleep. I shall sing all the songs I remember. Please listen.'*
>
> *So saying Manikkavachagar began singing in ecstasy. The Lord in the guise of a brahmin sat down there writing the songs on palm leaves. As Manikkavachagar was in ecstasy he hardly noticed the brahmin who was taking down the songs. Singing on and on he completely forgot himself in the thought of God and ultimately became silent. The old brahmin quietly disappeared.*
>
> *At daybreak the* dikshitar *[priest] came to the Nataraja temple as usual to perform the morning* puja *and as he opened the doors he found in front of the Nataraja image on the doorstep a palm-leaf book. When the book was opened and scrutinised there were in it not only the words '*Tiruvachakam*', it was also written that the book was written as it was dictated by Manikkavachagar. It was signed below, '*Tiruchitrambalam *[*Udaiyan*', meaning 'the Owner of] Chidambaram'. The stamp of Sri Nataraja was also there below the signature. Thereupon all the temple priests gathered in great surprise and sent word to Manikkavachagar, showed him the* Tiruvachakam *and the signature of Nataraja and asked him to tell them about the meaning of the hymns.*
>
> *Manikkavachagar did not say anything but asked them to accompany him, went to the temple of Nataraja and standing opposite to the Lord said, 'Sirs, the Lord in front of us is the only answer to your question. He is the answer'.*
>
> *After having said that he merged into the Lord.*

Suri Nagamma said that as Bhagavan was narrating the story, his voice was choked with emotion, and at the end, unable to speak any more, 'he remained in ecstatic silence'.

Only one small detail is missing from this account. After Manikkavachagar had sung all the songs that comprise the Tiruvachakam, *the brahmin asked him to sing a completely new work.*

Manikkavachagar obliged by composing Tirukkovaiyar *on the spot. These two texts are the only extant works of Manikkavachagar.*

61-62 Long live the glory of the fair and golden hands
with which he [Siva] wrote down [these works]
that they might shine forth [in the world]
as befitted his divine intent
that the world should know them and attain salvation!

Muruganar, a naturally humble and self-deprecating man, would never equate himself with Manikkavachagar, either as a poet or as a devotee. However, he did believe that, just as Siva was the real divine author of all of Manikkavachagar's works, that same Siva, in the form of Ramana Maharshi, was the true author of all his own works. Lines 61-62 are therefore to be taken as comments on Muruganar's own works as well as those of Manikkavachagar.

The following verses, composed by Muruganar, give an illuminating insight into both Bhagavan's high opinion of the Tiruvachakam *and Muruganar's experience of its true essence. The first four verses are comments by Bhagavan himself; in the final two Muruganar reveals that Bhagavan, whom he calls '*Padam*', gave him the true* jnana *that is the ultimate meaning of the* Tiruvachakam *verses:*

1296 *Manikkavachagar's* Tiruvachakam *expresses in words the exuberant, graceful experience of* Sivam*, which transcends speech.*

1295 Tiruvachakam *is a work that deserves to be experienced. The meaning of its sweet verses is beyond intellectual knowledge.*

1324 *When asked by others about the meaning of the* Tiruvachakam*, the great and saintly Manikkavachagar pointed at the subtle* chidakasa *[space of consciousness] and merged in it.*

1325 *The* Tiruvachakam *is a sea of divine honey expressing the God-experience that puts an end to the birth-misery of getting caught in the womb.*

2018 Padam *gave me* jnana *as the distilled essence of the sweet syrup,* Tiruvachakam*.*

1565 Padam *made me merge in the essence of the* Tiruvachakam*, [revealing it to be] the ultimate conclusion of the* Vedas*.*[3]

63-66 The wondrously glorious One,
remaining as the transcendent sky of consciousness,
sets spinning with the string of worldly bondage
the tops of all beings.
Long live the feet that are the being-consciousness-bliss
of him who does not stir even a little
as all else whirls about!

[3] *Padamalai*, pp. 354-5.

67-70 Long live the royal sceptre
that abolishes the whirl of births
for those who remain united with his feet,
which remain fixed in place,
unwavering like an axle,
which display in their nature no hint of any bias,
being like a cool shady tree in the desert
that cools the burning heat
of those who seek refuge in them!

71-74 Long live the immutable state of Arunesan
who brings his devotees to salvation,
permanently halting the chariot of birth
that repeatedly whirls them along in torment,
rushing with the speed of the wind
along the four pathways
and through the seven circles
upon a tempestuous and ever-changing course!

Arunesan is Arunachala-Siva, the divine Lord of Arunachala.

The four pathways may be a reference to the traditional four ways in which birth can take place: born from a womb; born from an egg; germinating in the earth – seeds for example; and by perspiration. There is an ancient traditional belief that insects are generated by perspiration.

The seven circles could be a reference to the seven divisions in which jivas *may take birth: gods, men, beasts, birds, reptiles, aquatic creatures, and immovable beings such as trees and plants. The various combinations of the four ways and the seven circles total 8.4 million, which is the traditional figure of the number of life forms that one may incarnate in.*

75-6 Long live the feet of the sovereign
who brings tranquillity to the minds
of those who have become strong
in their practice of devotion and faith
the moment they look upon him!

77-82 The hearts of those devotees
who have gained the light of *jnana*
from the jewel-like Guru

whose radiant beauty shines forth,
having brought to extinction
the minds of those who are most qualified,

will not cling to any other light
whose nature is delusion,
but will dwell triumphantly
as the shining non-dual supreme space.
May [his feet] enfold all
this world of imaginary appearances
that is reduced to nothingness
by the powerful light of that Supreme Expanse!

83-84 When merit and demerit accumulate,
they are only exhausted by experiencing them.

85 Hence, I will enter into joyful union with him,
only to be separated again,
when thoughts arise.

86-90 The grace-bestowing word of our Lord,
who abides as the Self,
becomes the means through which our suffering will end.
Through his speech
that parts us from the suffering that parts us from him
he gives us answers that enable us
to be never parted from him.
May those words,
without ever leaving this foolish heart,
shine out clearly, even in the deepest darkness,
and abolish my bondage.

91-92 From his holy mouth holy words flow forth,
conferring blessings, spoken
in the flawless language of heaven,
that his loving devotees might flourish.

'The flawless language of heaven' is a reference to an idea that also appears in the following Padamalai *verse:*

> *Like an incorporeal voice emanating from the heavenly sphere,* Padam *[Bhagavan] utters in ringing tones words of surpassing Siva*-jnana*.*[4]

The idea of the bodiless voice from the sky was explained by Bhagavan in the following comment:

> *Once, we were all listening to the radio in the Jubilee Hall. At the end of the programme the names of all the artistes were announced. Bhagavan said, 'See! The radio sings and gives speeches. It even announces the names of the performers. But there is nobody inside the radio. In the same way my existence is also like the sky. Though the body may appear to speak, like a radio there is no individual person [*asami*] inside. There is only God [*Sami*].'*[5]

93-94 Let him rule perfectly
over all living beings,
exercising his sovereign authority
by his unique word that sustains
the lineage of his devotees
as their support and protection.

'The unique word' is a reference to the phrase 'summa iru*'. meaning 'be still', or 'be quiet'.*

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[4] *Padamalai*, 'Bhagavan *Padam*' chapter, verse 13.
[5] *Ninaivil Niraindavai*, by Kanakamma, p. 199.

It appears again in lines 357-8 and is further explained there.

95-96 He of the divine lotus feet
is the primordial One,
the fundamental support of even that *sakti*
that is the ground and support
of all *saktis*.

97-98 The hallowed One, the form of grace,
who bears on his left side
the Mother of this world,
she who fosters the thirty-two charities.

Parvati, the consort of Siva, did intense tapas*, as a result of which she merged with him and became the left side of his body. These lines refer to a particular episode of her* tapas *that took place at Kanchipuram:*

> *The Goddess Parvati practised austerities on the bank of the River Kampa, observing punctiliously and simultaneously the thirty-two kinds of* dharma*.*[6]

The list of thirty-two charities includes items such as 'providing for travellers', 'giving alms', 'building houses for the poor', 'giving maintenance and education', and 'feeding the destitute'.

99-104 He takes those three purified organs of the wise –
the speech, the mind and the body –
as steed, elephant and chariot.
Mounting them, he goes riding in state,
his divine image seated in perpetuity
upon the lion-throne of their hearts.
May He rule over the beings of the earth,
so that their hearts rejoice
in the shelter of his matchless parasol,
as he sunders the evil whirl
of distortion and deception
through the exercise of his sovereign sway!

Traditionally, the umbrella is a symbol of authority and power, and it is occasionally used as a metaphor for God's all-encompassing power, authority and protection. In Arunachala Ashtakam*, verse seven, Bhagavan wrote:*

> *Until there is the 'I'-thought there can be no other thought. When other thoughts arise, ask 'To whom? To me. Where does this 'I' arise?' Thus diving inwards, if one traces the source of the mind and reaches the Heart one becomes the Sovereign Lord under the shade of a single umbrella...'.*[7]

*'Siva Puranam' starts with three sections whose lines begin, respectively, with '*Vazhga...*' ('Long live...'), '*Velga...*' ('Victory to...'), and '*Potri...*' ('Praise to...'). Muruganar follows this*

[6] *The Glory of Arunachala*, p. 133.
[7] *Five Hymns to Arunachala*, tr. K. Swaminathan, p. 124.

format for most of the next hundred and seven lines of 'Ramana Puranam'.

105-6 Long live the grace of the Lord
who ever protects those devotees
who have taken refuge in him
so that they do not languish and perish
like a ship [lost] in mid-[ocean]!

This may be an allusion to Aksharamanamalai*, verse 79, in which Bhagavan wrote: 'Let me not like a ship without a helmsman flounder in the storm. Guard me with your grace, O Arunachala!'*[8]

107-8 Long live the grace of our Father
who shines as the unique exemplar
of that noble nature that will not consent
to inflict suffering on living beings.

109-10 Long live the glory of him
whose munificent feet are imbued
with the exalted supreme bliss
that brings delight to the virtuous
whose thoughts do not swerve
from the path of the *dharma*.

The fourth line of 109-10 may also mean 'that brings delight to brahmins'. The term 'brahmin' in this line does not indicate a caste that one is born into. It instead refers to an exalted state that one rises to by virtuous behaviour. As Tirukkural*, verse 30, remarks, 'Call them brahmins who are virtuous and kind to all that live'.*[9] *It should be noted that the word 'brahmin' can also literally mean, 'one who abides as* Brahman'.

111-12 Long live the [very] dust of the feet
of the blissful companion
who never leaves
the hearts that love him,
dwelling agreeably therein,
dispelling their sorrow!

113-14 Long live the feet of him
who, as the omnipresent divine presence
is a treasure-trove in their [hour of] need
to those who have banished
[thoughts of] 'I' and 'mine'
by humbly bowing their heads!

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[8] *Five Hymns to Arunachala*, tr. K. Swaminathan, p. 74.
[9] *Tiruvalluvar, The Kural*, tr. P. S. Sundaram, pub. Penguin, p. 21.

115-16 Long live the holy lotus feet
that delight the great kings of *tapas*
who fix their thoughts upon him,
such that not a moment of their time
is spent in vain!

117-18 Long live the glory of the Mighty One
who, as the flood of bliss
within my heart,
caused my mouth to be silenced,
to end my interminable babbling!

119-20 Long live the holy feet
of the Supreme Godhead,
the *Atma swarupa* whose form is *jnana*,
within whom the entire world of external phenomena
manifests as unreal creations of the mind!

121-22 Long live the lotus feet of the Saiva Lord
who causes the glory of that divinely ordained abode
of Lord Siva, known as Tiruchuzhi, to shine!

Tiruchuzhi is the birthplace of Ramana Maharshi.

123-24 Long live the holy feet
of him who consumed with relish
the black poison [churned]
from the ocean [of milk],
and who now holds it in his throat,
his holy head shining
with the crescent moon!

This is a reference to the famous puranic story in which Siva voluntarily swallowed poison and held it in his throat in order to save the world. Bhagavan too was once given poison to drink. He survived but it severely damaged his gums.[10]

125-26 Victory to the holy feet
of the [divine] Player,
who lovingly made me his own,
destroying my age-old *vasanas*
so that their powerful hold
was abolished!

127-28 Victory to the holy feet of him
who slew the [six] inner enemies,
which are impossible to combat,
rooting out every last trace
of the powerful effects of my karma,
which are so hard to remove!

[10] *The Power of the Presence*, *Part One*, p. 24.

The six inner enemies are: kama *(desire),* krodha *(anger),* loba *(greed),* moha *(delusion),* mada *(pride), and* mathsarya *(jealousy).*

129-30 Victory to the holy feet of him
who is free of the desire and aversion
caused by the ego,
and [in token of that,]
wears as an ornament
a [poisonous] serpent!

131-32 Victory to the holy feet of the Valorous One
who wears the *vakai* garland,
triumphing over his enemies
as they wage war against him
wearing the *vanchi* garlands!

Muruganar is stressing the militant side of Siva's nature in these lines. The vakai *garlands are worn as emblems of military victory, whilst the* vanchi *garlands are worn by a king who is setting out to annexe the territories of his enemies. These enemies set off, wearing their* vanchi *garlands, intending to conquer Siva, but are all vanquished.*

The term 'Veerattan'*, translated here as 'the Valorous One' , is used to describe Siva when he is vanquishing his enemies by force. There are eight places in Tamil Nadu that are traditionally associated with eight of Siva's 'valorous' acts:*

1. *Tirukkandiyur, where he removed one of Brahma's heads.*
2. *Tirukkovilur, where he killed Andakasura.*
3. *Tiruvadikai, where he burnt the three* tripuras *(the three cities of the* asuras*).*
4. *Tirupparialur, where he plucked off Daksha's head.*
5. *Tiruvirkudi, where he killed the* asura *Calantaram.*
6. *Vazhuvur, where he skinned the elephant* asura*, Gajasura, whose hide he now wears.*
7. *Tirukkurukkai, where he burned Kama with the power of his third eye.*
8. *Tirukkadavur, where he kicked and killed Yama, the god of death, and saved Markandeya. He resurrected Yama afterwards..*

In verses 116 and 1459 of Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai *Muruganar praises Bhagavan himself as the one who performed all these acts.*[11]

133-34 Victory to the flowery feet,
like red lotus-blossoms,
dripping with nectar,
of him whose generous nature is such
that he does not shrink
from revealing himself
to those who love him.

The last portion of these lines may also mean, 'such that he is not ashamed of losing to his friends'.

[11] *Homage to the Presence of Sri Ramana*, tr. K. Swaminathan, p. 11 and p. 138.

135-38 To everyone's amazement
he gazes in such a way
that causes true devotion to flourish
even in the hearts of the young
who come into his presence.
Victory to the valiant feet
of him who ruled me,
so that my ego bowed its head
in his holy presence
that banishes cruel bondage!

139-40 Victory to the holy feet of him
who assures [liberation] to those
who delight on hearing about the glory [of the feet],
in whose heart there wells up true love,
and who [now] stand singing [their praises].

141-42 Victory to the holy feet of him
who is lauded
by the auspicious words
of those who sing his praises:
'May he [ever] prosper,
the Lord whose form
shines like gold!'

143-44 Victory to the holy feet of him,
who causes the gods to glorify
those who [thus] glorify him,
abolishing the sea of birth
that is their ruination!

145-46 Victory to the feet
that reveal themselves in such a way
that they are experienced by true devotees
who have become one with them
through the indispensable and overwhelming longing
known as devotion!

147-48 Victory to the holy feet
that are a sun to disperse
the dark mass of ignorance
in the minds of those devotees,
who, in the company of [his] grace,
have performed the highest austerities!

149-52 Victory to the golden glory
of the beautiful lotus feet, that,

for those who are moved
by an eager desire
to discover the real,
and who stand firm in submission to him
through a purity of mind
that never deviates
from rectitude,

are a mirror to reflect
the form of their own Self!

153-56 Victory to the holy feet
of the Munificent One,
who grants the life
of beauteous true *jnana*
that is the *Upanishads*' [essence]
to those who have freed themselves
from this deceitful existence,
taking as their support
the grace of our Father,
who liberally shines his light
in the vast expanse [of the heart]
to dispel the darkness,
the mean mind that is motivated by desire!

157-58 Victory to the golden feet of him
who distils a rare nectar
in the hearts of the devotees
who seek his company,
to ease the [triple] torment,
so hard to allay!

*The 'triple torment' (*tapatraya*) are the three miseries caused by (a) oneself (b) those brought about by natural events and (c) those that occur as a result of destiny. They are referred to in the* Bhagavatam*, Skandha VII, chapter 13, verse 30:*

> *Of what avail will be the wealth and the objects of enjoyment gained by great effort for man who is naturally subject to the three types of suffering caused by his own body and mind [*adhyatmika*], by external natural forces [*adibhautika*], and by extra-human agencies [*adhidaivika*].*[12]

159-60 Praise to the holy feet
that shine out as the [thousand-petalled] lotus
exclusively on the heads of those yogis,
who control the vital breath
by restraining it within the chest!

[12] *The Mountain Path*, 1998, p. 178.

161-62 Praise to the holy feet

caressed by *Parasakti*
until her hands grew red,

of the self-existent One,
for whom there is
neither mother nor father!

Saivas take pride in the fact that, unlike Vishnu, Siva never incarnates through human parents. If there is a need for him to manifest, he always appears in his fully grown form. Guhai Namasivaya, a Saiva saint who lived on Arunachala several hundred years ago, mentioned this in verse 70 of Arunagiri Antadi*:*

That all beings must undergo birth and death, this we clearly know
through the works of the masters of Tamil poetry.
That Lord Sonesan [Siva] took birth in some dwelling,
this we have not heard.
Neither have we heard that he lived upon this wide earth,
enjoyed its pleasure, and then passed away.

163-66 The same mind that remains still, like a rattan stick,
will, if it twirls slightly clockwise,
become a magic wand
that performs the five divine operations.
Glory to the feet of the one who is perfected in stillness
and who effortlessly performs in this way
the five divine functions
through the respective gods!

The five divine functions are creation, preservation, destruction, veiling and grace. That is to say, God creates, preserves and ultimately destroys the physical universe; he veils the true nature of himself and his creation through maya*, and he ultimately bestows the grace that enables one to transcend* maya *and attain liberation.*

Manikkavachagar sang about these five divine functions in 'Siva Puranam':

Remaining ever uncreated, dimensionless and indestructible, all worlds
do you create, preserve, destroy and imbue with your grace,
sending me forth [into birth], and [finally] initiating me into your service!
As close to me as fragrance [to a flower], far, you are, yet near!
Beyond speech and mind you stand, the Vedas*' Essence!*
Our Lord! As when sugar, ghee and fresh-drawn milk are mixed together
you abide, distilling nectar within the thoughts of glorious devotees,
cutting off entirely the births to which they are born![13]

[13] 'Siva Puranam', lines 41-8.

167-70 If, without comprehending this truth,
they [the gods] get conceited,
feeling that they are performing these [five divine] actions,
this is the farcical posing
of the image on a temple tower
pretending to bear the tower itself.
Praise to the holy feet of him
who [revealing this] toppled my flawed ego,
showing it to be without foundation,
and destroyed it!

The image of a carved statue on a temple tower pretending to support the weight of the tower is one that Bhagavan regularly used:

> *While God sustains the burden of the world, the spurious ego assumes its burden, grimacing like an image on a tower seeming to support it. If the traveller in a carriage which can carry any weight does not lay his luggage down but carries it painfully on his head, whose is the fault?*[14]

The second image in this verse, the passenger who insists on carrying his own luggage on a train journey, features in the next three lines of 'Ramana Puranam':

171-74 Those who do not know
how to dispel their suffering
by putting down their luggage,
[as they travel] in the train
that is the great refuge
which supports them all,
will, out of egoism,
keep that burden upon their heads,
convinced it is they who support it,
and in vain endure eternal suffering.

175-76 On asking the question 'Who are you ?'
those who rage like the unquiet sea
will be as if struck dumb,
and subside there and then.

177-78 They sleep the sleep of pitiful corpses,
losing the power of consciousness,
and unless they are woken up
[by the power of the Self]
they will not awaken.

[14] *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi, Ulladu Narpadu Anubandham*, verse 17, p. 125.

179-84 Like a legless man who says,
'If you help me stand up,
I will take on all my enemies
single-handedly and defeat them,'
they will not realise
that it is the power of Lord Siva
that animates them,
but in their delusion they will strive to attain
and exercise many supernatural powers.
Praise to the holy feet of him
who mocks the prowess
of these most eminent of mad fools,
ridiculing their confused
and misguided exertions!

These lines are an expansion of the idea that Bhagavan presented in verse fifteen of Ulladu Narpadu Anubandham*:*

> *Not realising that they themselves are moved by an energy not their own, some fools are busy seeking miraculous powers. Their antics are like the boast of the cripple who said to his friends, 'If you raise me to my feet, these enemies are nothing before me'.*[15]

185-86 Praise to the holy feet
of our Lord who securely encloses
within each of the five elements
its specific attributes,
omitting none of them!

This idea, that Siva endows the natural world with all its specific properties and characteristics, can be found in the Tiruvachakam*:*

> *He endows the sun each day with its effulgence;*
> *He imbues the sacred moon with her coolness;*
> *Within fire he kindles its warring might;*
> *To the incorruptible ether he gives its pervasive power;*
> *To the glorious wind he imparts its forceful energy;*
> *To the reflecting waters he gives sweet savour;*
> *To the earth he gives its obvious dense solidity.*
> *Thus does he ever enclose within the countless crores of entities*
> *their respective qualities, each according to their nature.*[16]

187-88 Praise to the holy feet of him
who assigned
the moon its coolness,
the sun its heat,
and the mind its discrimination!

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[15] *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, *Ulladu Narpadu Anubandham*, verse 15, pp. 124-5.
[16] 'Tiruvandappahudi', lines 20-28.

189-90 Praise to the holy feet of him
who since the beginning of time has created
the pairs of opposites and their absence
for the bondage and liberation
of the mass of living beings!

191-92 Praise to the holy feet of him
who is a friend to his devotees,
but the powerful thunderbolt of death
to the cruel and wicked
who have strayed from virtue's path!

193-96 Through the supreme attribute
of establishing in the blissful abode of eternal liberation
the devotees who praise those holy feet –

praise to the holy feet of him
who with a smile
destroyed the three cities! –

he consumes in the fire of his grace
our lowly hut,
created by a poverty of spirit,
reducing it to ashes.

'Our lowly hut' is our imagined sense of individuality, the I-am-the-body idea.

At a time when the devas *and the* asuras *were having one of their many wars, the three cities of the* asuras *were protected by a boon which specified that they could only be destroyed by one shot of a single arrow. When the* devas *were on the point of finally losing, they appealed to Siva and he obliged them by destroying all the* asura *cities with a single shot. There is an alternative version of this story (which Muruganar seems to be referring to here) in which Siva brings about the destruction of the three* asura *cities merely by smiling.*

197-98 Praise to the holy feet of the Lord
who, though abiding as perfect wholeness,
appeared as a holy sage
to rule over us
in seven successive births!

The 'seven successive births' is not to be taken literally. It just means the endless succession of births. This is a different idea from the seven forms in which one might manifest. These are referred to in lines 71-4.

199-203 Praise to the holy feet of the Lord of true *jnana*
who never slips from the state of *mauna*!
Through the way in which he taught me
the one glorious book,

that reveals the truth
that shines in the heart
so that its blackness was banished,

he entirely destroyed in me
the boundless appetite for other books,
whose worth is nothing.

.*The book alluded to here is* Ulladu Narpadu. *Most of its verses were written when Muruganar asked Bhagavan to write on various spiritual topics. Once the work was completed, Bhagavan gave Muruganar lessons on the meaning of all the verses.*

In the first two lines of the indented qualifying phrase Muruganar is saying that the truth which this book reveals shines in the hearts of all people; in the third line he is stating that the blackness of his own heart was banished as a result of the explanations of the verses of Ulladu Narpadu *that Bhagavan gave him.*

204 Praise to the holy feet of him
who holds me as his own,
I who have harboured for him
an enduring love from birth to birth!

205-06 Praise to the holy feet of the Ancient One,
who wins undying glory, ever and evermore,
through the munificence
with which he bestows the wealth of *jnana*,
which knows no lack!

207-08 Praise to the feet of him
who distils the ambrosial bliss
of the non-dual
within the hearts of those
who have shunned the false delights of duality!

209-10 For those whose attachment
is to cling to his feet,
through which attachment
they have become free,
he remains without attachment
as that which he is.
Praise to his feet!

211-12 Praise to the holy feet of the One
who inhabits all human forms,
who, everywhere and at all times
speaks through the mouths of all,
and causes the diverse movements
of their minds!

213-16 He is the peerless Primal One,
the supreme peace of *mauna*,
who, merging as the Heart within the Heart,
with no trace of the thought 'I',
remains merged with each being
through its 'I',
existing and shining forth
in all the beings of the world
as their own Self-nature.

217-20 When the 'I' thought does not arise,
and I unite [as pure being] with Him,
He remains merged with me
shining out as my very own fullness.
However, the very moment
I raise my head [thinking 'I'],
to perceive his ancient [form]
he sees my oddness, scorns me,
and conceals himself from me.

221-26 If I then bow down my head and die,
He flourishes within me,
shining his light as before.
Thus, the majesty of the Lord
will shine forth
only before the 'I' arises,
and after the 'I' subsides.
Who, then, will have the power
to tell of his greatness,
which can only be known
through the God-consciousness
in which the 'I' is absent,
and not through the awareness
in which the 'I' is experienced?

227-28 Worthless one that I am,
unfit to speak [of his glory],
I shall, by the exalted grace of that Great One,
expound the true nature of Siva-Ramana:

229-31 You are in heaven! You are upon the earth!
You are in the *Vedas* and in the *Agamas*!
You are in music! Your are in song!
You possess the five colours!
For those who can truly see,
you are present everywhere.

The 'five colours' is a reference to the five faces of Siva, which exhibit five colours: crystalline or smoky, golden, black, red and white. The same epithet of Siva also appears in 'Siva Puranam':

Possessor of the Five Colours! Our Mighty Lord,
invisible to the hosts of Heaven, even as they sang your praise![17]

Verse six of Unmai Vilakkam*, a Saiva Siddhanta text, associates each of these colours with one of the five elements: ether with smoky, earth with gold, water with white, fire with red, and air with black.*

231-32 You have entered and installed yourself
within the hearts of those
who sing your praises, worship you,
and meditate on you.

In the introduction to this translation of 'Ramana Puranam' Kanakamma mentioned that Muruganar composed the first two hundred lines and Bhagavan the remaining three hundred. The exact dividing line is no longer known since Muruganar himself took the trouble to obliterate any reference to this division of labour. However, there is a slight change in style from this point on, and this has led the editors to the conclusion that this may be the point at which Bhagavan began his work.

Within the portion that we are attributing to Bhagavan (233 to 540) there are a few lines that were written by Muruganar himself after 'Ramana Puranam' was first printed in 1938. These were inserted into the text later and published for the first time in the 1974 edition of Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*. However, these insertions are very minor.*

One should remember in the lines that follow that Bhagavan is merely attempting to finish a work that Muruganar began, a work that was intended to praise Bhagavan in a style that resembles that of Manikkavachagar's 'Siva Puranam'. For this reason it is quite unlike any of Bhagavan's other written works.

Bhagavan completed the work in the rather flowery literary style that Muruganar had adopted. He even included several quotations from the Tirukkural *because he knew that Muruganar had a great liking for that particular work.*

'Siva Puranam', the template for this work, is a poem in praise of the divine. There is no philosophy there, nor are there any instructions for sadhana*. It is pure panegyric. Though Bhagavan adhered closely to Muruganar's style of poetry in this composition, he did take the liberty of extending the range of the contents by occasionally introducing philosophical themes, some of which parallel verses he had composed for his own written works. However, since he was aware that the work was intended to be thematically similar to 'Siva Puranam', he also included topics that were found in Manikkavachagar's original text. Overall, though, most of the lines continue the earlier theme – praise of Siva-Ramana.*

Some people might think it odd that Bhagavan would complete a poem whose principal

[17] '*Siva Puranam'*, lines 49-50.

theme was praise of himself. However, as the following story by Viswanatha Swami indicates, if Bhagavan ever praised 'Ramana', he was actually praising the all-pervading substratum that Ramana had completely identified with:

> *There was also a devotee from Chidambaram, Subrahmanya Iyer, who often sang with great fervour the hymns in praise of Arunachala written by Bhagavan, songs in praise of Bhagavan written by his devotees, and hymns from the* Tiruvachakam*. One morning, when he began a song with the refrain* 'Ramana Sadguru, Ramana Sadguru, Ramana Sadguru rayane', *Bhagavan also joined in the singing. The devotees were amused and began to laugh at Bhagavan himself singing his own praise.*
>
> *While he was expressing his amusement, Bhagavan commented, 'What is extraordinary about it? Why should one limit Ramana to a form of six feet? Is it not the all-pervading divinity that you adore when you sing* "Ramana Sadguru, Ramana Sadguru*"? Why should I not also join in the singing?' We all felt lifted to Bhagavan's standpoint.*[18]

233-40 You concealed yourself within me,
like the oil within a sesame seed,
so that your presence within me
could not be clearly discerned.
Because of that veiling known as ignorance
the truth within my heart
was cloaked entirely in deep darkness,
and in this condition
the mind somehow turned outwards.
Through the power of multiplicity
which deludes and shows the world
as the five sense perceptions,
my mind, which knows them [objectively] as 'that',
became bewildered,
and deeming them [the sense perceptions]
to be profitable, sought them.

241-43 That seeking, evolving itself into desire,
became the seed that engendered
the never-ending succession of births,
bringing into existence the great and evil tree
that is the illusion of birth [and death].

These lines are a reference to verse 361 of Tirukkural*: 'Desire, they say, is the seed that engenders unceasing birth to all* jivas *at all times.'*

244-47 In my forgetfulness, I became a bird in that tree,
my mind confused by good and evil actions.
Looking around on all sides, in my perplexity,
I repetitively devoured its sweet and bitter fruits in vain,
experiencing again and again
unceasing suffering and enjoyment.

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[18] *The Power of the Presence, Part Two,* p. 230.

248-54 In this state of disgust, wherein there was not a trace
of clarity within my mind,
the king, who is my very life,
through his grace that is the truth,
free of the feelings of rejoicing and aversion,
appeared as a unique sage
in the city of Arunai
to save me from death,
worthless cur that I was,
and through his compassionate gaze
he revealed to me his holy lotus feet,
infusing me with an abundant, unending flood
of the ambrosia of being-consciousness
so that my mind became still.

255-56 On account of the forgetfulness
arising out of the illusion of *maha maya*,
they think that they are the body,
their mental faculties subverted.

257-61 Taking the seven forms of birth,
according to their mental pre-dispositions,
they do not conceive an aversion for this body
which reeks of the foul odour
of the three impurities,
but deem it a thing of great worth,
desiring it intensely,
and, propounding fallacious arguments,
commit the error [of taking the body to be 'I'].

The seven forms of birth were listed in the note to lines 71-4. The three impurities, according to Saiva philosophy, are anava *(the ego),* maya *and karma.*

261-64 Though it deceives one
by displaying itself outwardly
with a skin of golden hue,
the body exudes filth from its nine orifices
since what is within it is worm-ridden filth.

Though it is common for ancient Hindu spiritual texts to speak of the body in such a gross way, Bhagavan generally avoided such extreme imagery. Muruganar, though, in his verses, often wrote about the body in such terms. Bhagavan's language in these four lines parallels Muruganar's ideas on this subject, and it also harks back to a very similar passage in 'Siva Puranam'.

Bound I was by powerful deeds, yet so that this dark delusion
that hid me in its covering shroud might be allayed,
you tied me with the strong cord of sin and virtue,
so that I languished in a nine-doored hovel, oozing excrement,
a bag of filth and worms, covered by an outer skin,

as all five senses plagued me with their deceitful tricks.[19]

265-74 Even for sinners who bathe in the foul sewer-water
that is the love of this body,
bewilderment will subside and be destroyed
through the all-pervading nature of *mauna*.
They will remain in a state of rapture,
bathing in the vast ocean of unsurpassable bliss
that is the surging flood of absolute perfection
as they stand in your Court, where,
to the sound of your voice, dispensing *jnana*,
and the clamour of songs of praise,
your standard is raised up
amidst the ceaseless rattle of victory drums.
There, evil and ignorant as I was,
and worse than a dog in my conduct,
you showed me a tenderness
more noble and all-embracing
than that of a mother [for her child],
and subjected me to your rule.

The final sentence reverts to a theme from 'Siva Puranam' that was begun in the quotation that was appended to lines 261-64. This is how Manikkavachagar continued with his theme:

Then, O Pure One, to my lowly self, who with straying mind,
lacked the virtuous nature that softens and inwardly melts,
merging with you in love, you granted your compassion.
True One! Coming in grace upon this earth,
you revealed to me your noble feet,
showing to me, worse, as I was, than any dog,
a compassionate nature that is more precious than a mother's![20]

275-76 Destroying in me the [ideas of] 'I' and 'mine',
you yourself became for me that 'I', and that 'mine'!

277-80 You arose as the majesty of the luminous, supreme,
all-transcending consciousness,
so that the base part of my nature
shrank, out of shame, to the size of an atom!
Then, O Supreme Reality,
you revealed that even that tiny atom
was also false,
as you dwelt in the quintessential purity
of your own Self-nature!

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[19] 'Siva Puranam', lines 51-55.
[20] 'Siva Puranam', lines 56-61.

281-82 Radiant Effulgence, that entirely dispels
the profitless, dark ignorance
of the beings of the earth,
who flounder bewildered upon the ocean
of the pairs of opposites –
prosperity and poverty and all the rest!

283-84 Glorious Light, which for *jivas*
who are caught up in the triad,
ends its delusive power
by revealing it to be a conjuring trick!

The components of the triad referred to here are knower, knowing and known.

285-86 Shining *swarupa*, remaining alone
as the supreme light of the Self
when [all else] subsides,
through the assertion: 'Not this', 'Not this',
so that not a trace of anything 'other' remains!

287-88 Unique Essence
that cannot be perceived objectively
through the false imaginings
of the flawed mind,
but can only be known
through the perfect consciousness
of *Atma swarupa*, *mauna*!

289-91 You are the unmoving reality, the *Atma jnana*
that rises to bestow an excellence [of clarity]
on the deluding distortions that mask the *jiva*,
which are merely reflections
upon the mirror of the shaking mind.
Such is your nature!

292-94 You hold *maya*, which creates the illusion
that this nature does not exist,
totally under your control
such that the awareness of those
who have obtained your grace
does not stir even slightly.

295-96 To those who are deluded
you are non-existent,
not accessible to their faculties
even in the minutest degree.
But to the gaze of the *jnani*
you are perceived everywhere
as the absolute fullness.

297-98 To those who love you, you are the near one,
to those who do not, you are the far one.
Am I worthy to know
and speak of your noble nature?

299-302 When even the Four *Vedas* and the *Agamas*,
rising up arrogantly [to describe your nature],
fell silent, their presumption quelled,
it is indeed an occasion for great mirth
that I should speak of
your glory and distinction, your actions,
the nobility of your attributes,
your name and your fame.

The following somewhat cryptic lines appear in 'Siva Puranam':

When the Vedas *called you 'Sire!'*
you rose up on high, plumbed the depths,
and spread far and wide as the Subtle One![21]

The idea behind both these passages seems to be that the Vedas*, having presumptuously and fruitlessly attempted to fathom and explain the Self, finally have to concede that the all-pervading* Sivam *is beyond the scope of their explanations and descriptions. A few lines later, though, Manikkavachagar states: 'Beyond speech and mind you [Siva] stand, the* Vedas*' essence!'*[22]

303-04 Wish-fulfilling tree of heaven,
who grants your grace with tender love
to all those who adore you,
and sing your praises,
be they dwellers in the lower worlds,
upon earth or in the celestial realms!

305-06 Even if the most insignificant of your devotees
come to possess a desire,
you enable them to be enthroned
in the royal assembly
of the king of the gods.

In the presence of the Guru, desires are automatically fulfilled, even worldly ones. The Guru does not pick and choose which of his devotees' desires he is going to fulfil because he has no sankalpa*, no individual will that decides 'I will fulfil this desire,' or 'I will not fulfil that particular desire'. However, by continuously abiding as the Self, the Guru generates a* sannidhi*, a presence, that automatically takes care of the desires of devotees who come into this presence. Bhagavan explained in some detail how this process works in a conversation he had with Narayana Iyer that was recorded in* The Mountain Path *(1968, p. 236).*

The 'insignificant' devotees mentioned in these lines are those who come to Bhagavan with worldly desires rather than spiritual ones. The statement that devotees can become enthroned as king of the gods is merely a metaphor to indicate that there is no limit to the desires that the Guru

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[21] 'Siva Puranam', lines 34-35.
[22] 'Siva Puranam', line 45.

can fulfil.

The following question and answer elaborate on this theme. In his reply Papaji draws a distinction between those who go to the jnani *with desires and those who turn up in a thought-free and desireless state:*

> ***Question:*** *[Bhagavan says] that the Guru never does anything in response to a devotee's request because he has no* sankalpa*, no ability to act with a particular goal in mind. But by abiding in this desireless state, a* sannidhi*, a presence, is created that automatically takes care of all the devotees' needs and requests. I presume you agree with this.*
>
> ***Papaji:*** *The enlightened man, the* jnani*, does not do anything. He just sits quietly, like a mountain. He does not respond to your requests by doing anything, but if you go near him with a desire in your mind, there will be an automatic response. If you throw a rubber ball at a wall, it will bounce back. The angle and speed of the ball off the wall will depend on the angle and speed at which you throw it. The wall does not have to decide how to respond the incoming ball. When you go into the presence of a* jnani *with desires in your mind, the appropriate response comes back automatically. You don't even have to talk about them. If your mind is in the presence of a* jnani*, it will be flinging its desires at the wall of his enlightenment, and that wall will give you back what you desire or need. But if you go into the presence of a* jnani *without any thoughts or desires, what will be reflected back will be the state of thoughtlessness and desirelessness. In his presence you will be established in that state. This is the* sannidhi*, the presence of a* jnani*, at work. You don't need to ask for anything. Just go near him.*[23]

307-10 However many births were possible,
I have experienced them all and grown weary.
Even if my mind could take birth
in the lofty position of being one of the gods,
beginning with Indra himself,
I would no longer consent to the suffering
and weary lamentation [of birth].

311-14 Even the blackest of crows,
when it alights upon beautiful golden Mount Meru,
is transformed into the form of pure gold.
In just the same way, even those *jivas*
who are entirely without distinction will,
upon joining the presence of divine consciousness,
one's own reality, attain by its glorious majesty
the sublime form of the Self and shine.

[23] *Nothing Ever Happened*, volume three, by David Godman, pp. 335-6.

315-16 [Therefore], my Lord and Master,
may you bestow upon me that *mauna*,

whose form is the expanse of true *jnana*,

imprinting that truth upon my heart
so that I no longer perceive myself
as a form of flesh and blood.

317-20 Youthful *mauna* Guru, you who,
shining as the divine manifestation of God,
at the head of the lineage of Gurus,
reveal the supreme truth,
the unique speech of [*mauna*]
that is the mind's source,
which is the mother of all language
but which, unlike the spoken word,
neither appears nor disappears.

This is a reference to Siva appearing as Dakshinamurti and teaching four sages through the medium of mauna, *silence. Dakshinamurti is traditionally held to be the original Guru, the founding father of all Guru lineages.*

321-24 All the ancient treatises on *jnana*
are merely an introductory preface,
enunciated by the learned,
to your book of *mauna*,
which confers true knowledge.
Are they not therefore alien to true understanding,
those who, even though they have studied all the others,
have lost their connection to that [book of] *mauna*?

325-30 If a child does something naughty,
it is only fitting that the mother
should tolerate and pardon that misdeed.
Likewise, if there is any misdeed on my part,
done either knowingly or unknowingly,
may you overlook it, thinking it nothing,
and give me your joyful approval.
For the world knows that such is the conduct we display,
one towards the other, that I engage in misdeeds
against your holy feet, and you pardon them.

331-34 You whose holy feet drive out
the black ignorance of *maya* !
You who are [like] a great cloud,
pouring down the rain of bliss
that is your grace!
You who are the flood of bliss
in the great river of true *jnana*,
quenching the scorching flames,
so that they flare up no more
from the three kinds of distress
that sorely torment us!

*The three kinds of distress (*tapatraya*) were explained in the note to lines 157-58.*

335-38 Ambrosia, delicious to consume!
Great Light, transcending speech!
Mother, you who are an ocean of compassion,
imbued with love's refreshing sweetness!
Bridegroom, whose feet are like gold,
you who united with my consciousness
within the heart, so that I,

mere dog that I am,
devoid of even one good quality,

might [truly] see!

339-42 Youthful One! Beauteous One!
Lord of *jnana*, who destroyed
the power of the ego,

which arises through the association
with the filthy body,

so that I was infused
with the clarity of consciousness
that is the luminous nature,
without divisions, of *Sivam*,
which no one can describe!

343-50 The wealth, the real that blazes forth
as the radiant light of the Self,
is obscured and dimmed by the ego,
the thought 'I am the body',
which harasses and torments *jivas*
through the obstacle whereby they are unable
to satisfy unlimited and excessive desires,
thus filling them with the poverty
that is base and worthless ignorance.
But you, source of my existence,
shine within my Heart
like a perfect storehouse of treasure
that is beyond the three primal entities,
so that I, your devotee,
rise up resplendently and with exhilaration,
totally free of that ignominy.

The three primal entities might be the three gunas *(*sattva, rajas *and* tamas*), the three* avasthas *(waking, dreaming and sleeping), the three* triputis *(knower, knowing and known, or seer, seeing and seen) or the triad of* jiva*, Iswara and the world.*

351-52 Illustrious one, who unites in the Heart
with those who,

rather than going forth into the world
to pursue their dishonest dealings,

devote themselves to your service alone,
as that which is fit and proper.

353-54 Lord of Compassion,
who through his sweet grace
conjoined my consciousness with his own Self,
so that in the world
I am no longer be deluded by desire,
as I was before!

355-56 You it is who manifest
in a threefold form,
as holy images, shrines and holy waters,
which your devotees,
in transports of delight,
[worship before, dwell at, and] bathe in!

This is a reference to a Thayumanavar verse that Bhagavan sometimes quoted:

For those who, in the prescribed manner,
have embarked upon the [pilgrim] path
of divine images, holy sites and holy tanks,
a Sadguru, *too, will come*
to speak one unique word,

O Supreme of Supremes![24]

The second half of this verse is mentioned in the next two lines:

357-58 For those who thus joyfully
[worship, dwell and] bathe in these,
you, as *Sadguru*,
directly bring forth from your holy mouth
the unique word.

The unique word is 'summa iru'*, meaning 'Be still', 'Be quiet', or 'Remain as you are'. Thayumanavar's Guru, Mauna Guru, gave it to him as his first instruction, and Ramana Maharshi frequently gave out this teaching to his own disciples.*

359 All-pervading Subtle One,
whether above or below,
there is nowhere you are not!

360 Lord of Truth,
you who gush forth and shine
within the hearts of those
who conduct themselves with humility!

361-62 Bliss of *Sivam*, welling up
ever more copiously for your devotees
whenever they think [of you],
wherever they may be!

In his commentary to verse thirty-one of Aksharamanamalai *Muruganar wrote 'In the Heart in which Arunachala has taken up residence, the bliss of peace will surge and the miseries of unwanted mental functions will be extinguished'.*[25]

The original merely says that bliss will well up in devotees whenever they think. Bhagavan would normally say that bliss would well up when thoughts cease, not when they are active. It is possible that this verse is saying that the bliss of Sivam *protects devotees from pursuing stray thoughts by manifesting itself whenever thoughts happen to occur. A more traditional interpretation comes from adding '[of you]' in the penultimate line.*

363-64 You whose wondrous but ordinary nature
is such that the evil senses,
the organs of sense
and the intellectual faculties
languish and fade,
being unable to unite with you!

The 'evil senses' are seeing, tasting, smelling, and so on, while the 'organs of sense' are the physical parts of the body (the eyes, the tongue, the nose, etc.) that register them.

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[24] Thayumanavar, 'Paraparakkanni', verse 156. Bhagavan cited this verse and explained its meaning in *Living by the Words of Bhagavan*, 2nd ed., pp. 220-1.

[25] *Aksharamanamalai Vritti Urai*, by Muruganar, 1984 ed., p. 44.

365-66 False to those
whose gaze is outward-turned,
you are the real
to those whose gaze is inward-turned!
Cruel to those who hate you,
you are kind with those who love you!

367-68 You whose infinitely subtle nature
shines in the [heart-]centre
as the supreme *Atman*,
the knowledge of which
cannot be embodied
[even] in treatises composed
with subtlety of intellect!

369-72 Honey that abounds
on the soaring topmost peak
of a lofty mountain,
that cannot be reached by those
whose powerful legs are paralysed!
[These legs] are the assiduous practice
of *Siva yoga,* the method for which
is to look inward,
without faltering even for an instant
in the quest for the supreme grace.

373-74 Delicious, sweet syrup of devotion,
known to the hearts of those devotees
who practise the attitude of oneness [*aikya bhava*],
like *sundara* and *azhagu* together.

Sundara *and* azhagu *are both words that mean 'beauty'. They are also the names of Bhagavan's parents. The image being conveyed here is that oneness prevails, despite the apparent division brought about by words and concepts. As Bhagavan wrote in* Aksharamanamalai*, verse 2: O Arunachala, may I and you, like Azhagu and Sundaram, become one and be indivisible!*[26]

[26] *Five Hymns to Arunachala*, tr. K. Swaminathan, p. 12.

375-80 Where the spurious, limited, and profitless ego,
which declares that the fleshy body is 'I',
bows its head in shame and falls away,

through the knowledge gained by sinking within
by means of the enquiry 'Who am I?',
conducted with extreme tenacity,

there do you shine, as the source of all things,
the luminous sky of pure consciousness,
which is not an empty void,
but in which the deluded perception
of the *triputis* has subsided;
[there] a deep rapture wells up,
wherein bliss abounds!

This is an expanded version of Ulladu Narpadu, *verse thirty, in which Bhagavan wrote:*

When the mind turns inward seeking 'Who am I?' and merges in the Heart, then the 'I' hangs down his head in shame and the one 'I' appears as Itself. Though it appears as 'I-I', it is not the ego. It is Reality, Perfection, the Substance of the Self.[27]

381-82 Who are they who might describe
the blissful peace of that blessed state,
when even those who have known it,
find it impossible thereafter to know it again!

When the Self has been realised, the individual 'I' which previously knew, understood and experienced objects ceases to exist. No one remains to 'know'. Manikkavachagar mentioned this in Tirukkovaiyar, *verse nine, where he said: 'Those who have known him once cannot ever know him again'.*

383-84 Supreme Expanse, feared by those who,
indulging in vain disputation,
rise up with an angry impetuosity like disturbed hornets.

385-86 Illustrious One, who cannot be perceived
by the deluded vision [of the mind],
but can only be known and experienced
through the eye of grace!

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[27] *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 119.

387-92 You who are as clearly perceivable
as a fruit of the *nelli* tree
in [the palm of] one's hand,
to those true devotees
in whom a deep devotion to Lord Siva
has been stirred up,
filling their hearts to overflowing,
and who have truly
entrusted themselves to his feet,
even if,

> like the huntsman Kannappa of Kalatti
> whose love was great indeed for Kudumitteva,
> the father of the expanse of consciousness,

they are uneducated,
unable even to count or read!

Kannappa was an illiterate tribal hunter who was so in love with Siva, he attempted to offer him his eyes when he believed that Siva's own eyes had been damaged. His story appears in the Periyapuranam*, the anthology of the lives of sixty-three Saiva saints that was written about a thousand years ago. Kannappa lived near Kalahasti (whose old name is Kalatti) and Kudumitteva was the name of the Siva image he worshipped.*

393-94 Light which shines in the hearts
of those who,

> knowing nothing of deceit,
> but cleaving to the truth,

have come to know
the secret of *jnana*!

395-96 Most Opulent One,
endowed with the wealth
of flawless true *jnana*
that shines forth only
upon the destruction of
the *jiva's* ego!

397-98 Reality, most beguiling, who,

> where the clamour of the ego
> has subsided,

reveals his face
so that it may be seen!

399 You who shy away from those
who are lacking in self-restraint!

400 You who, with your gaze,
banish the insurmountable anxieties
of the mind!

Whilst being the unique support for the world,
you are the [eternally] present sky of *mauna*
existing without any support [whatsoever].

The last three lines are not numbered and were not originally part of 'Ramana Puranam'. They appeared in Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham*, volume nine, page 305, along with a note by Muruganar which states that these lines should be inserted at this point in the text.*

401-02 Supreme Lord, who shines as their very own Self,
in the hearts of those who are adepts
in the foremost way of *jnana*.

403-04 Leader of even the thrice eleven principal gods,
who have achieved that lofty authority
so hard to attain!

405-10 Even as, in the light of the sun,

that shines, ever undiminished,
banishing obscurity,

the accumulated darkness cannot approach,
is revealed as false, and disappears,
just so does He

through the light
of His pure consciousness
which is the real,

shine eternally as the boon of liberation,
ever untouched by cruel and painful worldly bondage,
showing that 'delusion' is just a word,
like the 'blue' in 'blue sky'!

411-12 Though you are the Omnipotent One,
your excellence stands as a unique measure
of freedom from desire,
which characterises the most eminent of ascetics.

413-14 For those who see the triad
of God, [the world, and the soul]
without the taint [of the ego],
you, the all-embracing Godhead
end up as the single, primal entity.

415-16 You who, in your form of *mauna jnana*,
which is the support [for all things],
cannot be approached by [concepts] such as
beginning, middle and end!

417-20 Yours is the waking sleep
that is the true waking-state,
the exalted sphere of final liberation,
whose radiance unfolds
as the pure space of the Heart,
wherein the world,

> whose nature is all mind-space,
> and which is seen as waking,
> dreaming and overpowering deep sleep,

is finally ended.

421-24 For *jivas*, desire is ended
by means of the fundamental *guna*
[the *sattva guna*].
Through its deeply subtle nature
it establishes the intimate relationship
between the *jivas* and yourself.
Though one cannot unite with you
except through the first *guna*,
you are the transcendental one,
free of attributes, soaring beyond even that [first *guna*].

425-28 The second person and the third person,
manifesting as multiplicity,
appear after the first person,
the foremost of the foremost, arises.
When it disappears by knowing its source,
along with it, the other two
simultaneously vanish in that place.
The light of that source which then shines
is the indivisible fullness
that is one's own true form.

This idea is one that Bhagavan wrote about in verse fourteen of Ulladu Narpadu*:*

> *If the first person exists the second and third persons will also exist. If the reality of the first person is enquired into and the first person ceases to exist, the second and third person will [also] cease to exist and all will shine as one. This is one's true nature.*[28]

The same idea also appears as answer nine of Who am I?

[28] *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, 1979 ed., p. 115.

429-32 For those whose compassionate gaze
is that which sees without seeing,

> through the glorious clarity
> in which the 'I', the form of the ego
> ceases to exist,
> having become a prey [to the Lord],

you are the comely vision of Siva Loka,
established as pure consciousness alone,
not only here but everywhere.

433-34 To investigate the past and the future
without [considering] yourself,
you who abide perpetually
in the present moment
as the peerless 'now',
is this not [like] counting
without [the number] one?

These two lines are almost identical in content to Ulladu Narpadu, *verse 15:*

> *Past and future are dependent on the present. The past was present in its time and the future will be present too. Ever-present is the present. To seek to know the future and the past, without knowing the truth of time today, is to try to count without the number 'one'.*[29]

435-36 You, then, are known to the senses,
not only as 'I' and 'other' [*aham* and *idam*],
but also as the three persons
and the three modes of time.

437-40 Since you alone shine [as the Self],
with nothing other than yourself
either to know you,
or to be known by you,
you are the feature-free *jnana*
that shines as the essence
of the multitude of characteristic features
that appear to the mind
that does not enquire!

441-42 You are lofty and unmoving,
standing as the supreme non-dual reality,
a matchless abode for the eternally enduring
abidance in supreme *jnana* [*para-jnana-nishta*].

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[29] *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 117.

443-46 Since it is only by investigating,
sinking within, and uniting [with you],

so that one's own truth
becomes harmonized
with the powerful reality
of your own righteous nature,

that the true perception of you,
who are being-consciousness,
may be obtained,
how [might this be achieved]
by seeking with the mind,
which possesses only
the objective knowledge
of the gross objects of sense?

This is an expanded rendering of the second half of verse eight of Ulladu Narpadu*:*

> *Yet, to see one's true Self in the Absolute, to subside into It and be one with It, this is the true knowledge of the Truth.*[30]

447-50 You are the one,
devoid of the dualistic division
that knows oneself as an object.
Because you are wearing your Self,

in which objective knowledge is not possible,

as your loincloth, you,
the nature of pure consciousness,
do not know what the beautiful colour of the loincloth is.

Muruganar had a friend, V. S. Chengalvaraya Pillai, who was a distinguished commentator on Tamil devotional literature. At some point Chengalvaraya Pillai had a dream in which he visited Bhagavan in Tiruvannamalai and had his darshan*. The contents of the dream, which he noted in his diary in the 1930s, were recorded in a biography that was written by his children:*

> *I went to Tiruvannamalai, where a multitude of* bhaktas *was assembled. Everyone was worshipping by performing* pradakshina *of Swami. When my turn came, a devotee of Sri Ramana called Muruganar instructed me to pay homage to Swami, and to ask him what the colour of the loincloth he was wearing was.*
>
> *I, in my turn, fell at the feet of Swami, weeping, and cried out: 'Swami, what is the colour of your exalted loincloth, the one spoken of in the phrase, "He wears Himself as a loincloth"? May you show your compassion and clarify this matter!'*
>
> *Immediately, he replied 'That is not known even to me,' and asked me to repeat the line again twice.*
>
> *He listened to me and then asked, 'Where is that wonderful line found?' and I replied, 'It is in the 'Tiruchazhal' [line four of verse two], in the* Tiruvachakam*'.*

[30] *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 116.

'That is good. You must remain mindful of that,' he said.[31]

451-55 This world is a moving picture show
of [sights and] sounds,
driven along with a great hubbub
by a whirlwind fuelled
by the unreal effects of former deeds,
which have no reality other than
in the imagination of the mind.
It is like an insubstantial mirage
that appears as a pool of water
to those who suffer,
tormented by their desire for water.

456-58 They are indeed the 'wisest of the wise'
who, seeing such a world, abandon you.
They are like those who, failing to see the screen
that is the [underlying] reality,
see [only] the images of [light and] shadow
projected upon it, and are delighted,
or like those who study and rejoice in
the music [made of the] seven principal sounds, and so on,
ignoring the fundamental note
which is their indispensable source.

459-60 No trace of doubt or contradiction
can arise within one's own nature, existence,
as it does in [the world of] the illusory objects of sense
which appear to be 'other'.

461-62 By virtue of this nature you are the Supreme Being,
the perpetually radiating sun of the Self,
which is the true reality,
impossible to reject or deny,
shining out in the darkness [of ignorance]
as the light [of *jnana*],
the 'I am' of even he
who denies your existence.

463-64 Life of bliss, all-pervading fullness
that knows no absence anywhere,
whose nature remains the same,
possessing an abundance wherein
there is neither addition nor diminution!

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[31] *Dr V. S. Chengalvaraya Pillai Varalaru*, by Jnanapoorani and others, pub. Tirunelveli Saiva Siddhanta Publishing House, 1972, p. 34.

465-66 Supreme consciousness of the Self,
whose divine radiance shines
fulsomely within the Heart
as an inextinguishable lamp!

467-72 Your are light! You are darkness!
You are the reality that is neither of these!
Your are the Supreme that is the refuge
for us your devotees!
You are *jnana*! You are the brilliance of *jnana*!
You are grace's clear serenity!
Yours is the greatness of the
all-transcending space of consciousness!
You are one! You are two!
You are the beauteous temple of *mauna*
standing beyond both of these!
You are medicine! You are a jewel!
You are the exalted holy *mantra*!

Oushata, mani *and mantra (medicine, jewels and mantras) are traditional remedies for poison and disease. Here, Siva-Ramana is extolled as a cure for spiritual diseases.*

473-74 You are love, deep and bliss-bestowing,
arising first as the source of all that is!
You are the infinitude
that abides immovably as *Sivam*!

Lines 459 to 474 are modelled on a portion of 'Siva Puranam' in which Manikkavachagar praises Siva in a long series of exclamatory statements:

Flawless effulgence, flowering with the brilliance of blossom in full bloom!
Lustrous One! Nectar-filled ambrosia! Lord of Sivapuram [Siva's city]!
Learned One, who severs the fetter of bondage and protects us!
Great River of deep compassion who unmovingly abides,
granting in love your grace, so that wickedness dies within our hearts!
Ambrosia, for which the appetite cannot be sated! Great One, without limit!
Light that lies hidden with the hearts of those who do not seek you out!
You who abide as my very soul, melting [my heart] till it runs like water!
You who are without pleasure and pain, and yet possess them both!
Lover of those who love you! Radiance that is all things, and nothing at all!
You who are dense darkness! You whose greatness does not outwardly appear!
Primordial One, you are the middle and the end, and neither of these!
Lord and Father, who drew me to yourself, and made me yours!
Sight that, even for the minds of those who apprehend you
with the acute discrimination of true jnana, *is hard indeed to see objectively!*
Subtle consciousness that cannot be made more subtle!
Holy One who neither comes nor goes, nor unites with anything!
Guardian and Protector! Vast Effulgence, that none can see!
Flooding river of delight! Father! As the light that illumines
all the wonders that are seen, as the unutterably subtle consciousness,
you are the certainty behind all the knowledge that variously manifests

in this mutable world! You are true knowledge absolute! Within my thoughts
you are the rare savour of ambrosia, welling up! My Lord and Possessor![32]

475-80 There is nothing that you are,
yet without you, nothing is.
This being so, separation from you
is only forgetfulness of you.
Therefore, just as you are reached
by the thoughts of those
who unite with you in fitting manner
out of their deep love for you,
so also you are reached
by the very [hostile] thoughts of those
who have enmity towards you
and who hate you like cruel death.
However, to reach the holy feet in this way,
is conduct suited only
to the wicked nature of the *rakshasas*.

Bhagavan once made the following remarks to Sambasiva Rao:

'When good people are abused, they may not retaliate, but they are hurt, and because of that the abuser may have to suffer. There is also a saying in the scriptures that he who curses good people gets all the bad that may be still left in them. If you want to curse at all, curse Bhagavan. He will not be hurt and he is without sin. You are safe in cursing him. He wants only to be remembered. The mood in which you remember him is of less importance. Were it otherwise, how could Ravana and Sishupala get salvation?'[33]

Ravana had a constant hatred of Rama, and Sishupala had a similar strong dislike of Krishna. Both finally attained liberation when they died because they had spent their lives constantly thinking about God, even though it was only in a negative way.

In Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, talk no. 88, Bhagavan confirmed that 'Love or hatred is immaterial' when one thinks of God. It is the intensity of the thought that ultimately counts.*

481-82 You are the non-dual, divine *Sadasiva*,
the true *Atma swarupa*,
who can only be attained
through [divine] love!

[32] 'Siva Puranam', lines 62-83.
[33] *The Power of the Presence, Part Three,* p. 91.

483-86 Since you remain merged with [our] nature
as the form of supreme bliss,

you who inspire in us a far deeper, true love
than any of the objects
that are other than ourselves,

to hate you, and feel anger
in our hearts towards you,
is a meaningless act arising out of
the delusion of the foolish mind
in that it denies our own love of ourselves.

487-92 Sun of *dharma* who scorches those ghost-like ones
who show no loving conduct
so that they suffer unbearable misery!
It is not the fault of *dharma*
that those in whom there is no love
perish, quaking with agony
like boneless worms
exposed to the mid-day sun.
The ripe crop of destiny,
like a shadow, never goes away,
but follows and clings to those
who commit sinful deeds,
as if unable to control themselves.

There is a reference to verse 77 of the Tirukkural *in the middle of these lines: 'In the same way that the sun scorches boneless worms,* dharma *scorches those lacking in love.'*

493-97 By meditating upon the twin feet
of 'The Lord who knows what is written',

he who destroys and reduces to nothing
the burden of fate, written [upon the heads]
of the most excellent of his devotees,

the *brahmachari* Markandeya overcame,

through the intensity of his love
for the one who ordained his destiny,

the fate that decreed
that he should die
as it had been ordained.

'*The Lord who knows what is written' is a reference to Siva as Ezhuttariyum Peruman, the presiding deity in the Tiruvotriyur Temple. This epithet arose from the following incident. The king of the territory in which this temple was located once issued an edict saying that everyone in his domain should be taxed. When this written document was presented to the people, it was discovered that an insertion had been made exempting the deity of this temple from the tax. Since*

none of the civil servants had dared to interfere with the king's orders, the exemption was attributed to Siva himself. 'The Lord who knows what is written' became a title of the deity in the temple, and the name of the town itself, 'Tiruvotriyur', means 'exempted place'.

It is a common belief that one's destiny in life has been inscribed on one's head by Brahma. There is a wavy line that separates two plates of the skull, and the shape and curvature of this line differs from person to person. One's destiny is supposedly encoded in this wavy line.

Tiruvotriyur was the town where Bhagavan gave darshan *to Ganapati Muni after mysteriously flying through the air from Tiruvannamalai to see him. This is Arthur Osborne's description of the event:*

> *While he [Ganapati Muni] was sitting in meditation in the temple of Ganapati at Tiruvotriyur he felt distracted and longed intensely for the presence and guidance of Sri Bhagavan. At that moment Sri Bhagavan entered the temple. Ganapati Muni prostrated himself before him and, as he was about to rise, he felt Sri Bhagavan's hand upon his head and a terrifically vital force coursing through his body from the touch; so that he also received grace by touch from the Master.*
>
> *Speaking about this incident in later years, Sri Bhagavan said, 'One day, some years ago, I was lying down and awake when I distinctly felt my body rise higher and higher. I could see the physical objects below growing smaller and smaller until they disappeared and all around me was a limitless expanse of dazzling light. After some time I felt the body slowly descend and the physical objects began to appear. I was so fully aware of this incident that I finally concluded that it must be by such means that* Siddhas *travel over vast distances in a short time and appear and disappear in such a mysterious manner. While the body thus descended to the ground, it occurred to me that I was in Tiruvotriyur though I had never seen the place before. I found myself on a highroad and walked along it. At some distance from the roadside was a temple of Ganapati and I entered it.'*[34]

Markandeya, who is also mentioned in these lines, was destined to die at the age of sixteen, but through his devotion to Siva, he managed to escape his fate.

Mrikanda, Markandeya's father had prayed to Siva to get a son. Siva appeared before him and said, 'Do you desire to have a virtuous, wise and pious son who will only live to be sixteen, or a dull-witted, evil-natured son who will live for a long time?'

Mrikanda opted for the short-lived son, who turned out to be a child-sage. On the day of his appointed death, Yama came to collect him. Markandeya cried out to Siva for help and embraced the idol of Siva that he usually meditated on. Yama threw his rope and lassoed the idol as well as Markandeya. This angered Siva, who came down from the heavens to help and killed Yama with a single blow of his foot. Siva then granted Markandeya the boon that he could be sixteen forever, and thus avoid death, and he also restored Yama's life.

498-500 You are the exultation of those fierce warriors [of *jnana*]
who, [through a love like that of Markandeya],
exert themselves unrelentingly,
through the supreme strength of grace,
free of forgetfulness in the heart,
so that they triumph over fate
and are no longer tormented by it.

There is a reference to Tirukkural *verse 620 in these lines: 'Those that strive undaunted will*

[34] *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge*, B. I. Publications, 1979 ed., pp. 96-7.

see the back of fate itself.'[35]

501-02 You are the all-embracing splendour
of the supreme *Sivam*
that transcends even the primal ignorance,
the source of destiny and free-will!

Here Bhagavan is stating that free will and destiny arise from 'primal ignorance', and not from the Self. This supports the assertion of some commentators who have said that the 'self' mentioned in verse nineteen of Ulladu Narpadu *is the individual self:*

> *The argument as to which wins, fate or free-will, is only for those who do not have knowledge of the root of fate and free-will [namely the ego, which is itself unreal]. Those who have known [the non-existence of] the self [the ego self], which is the one base of fate and free-will, have given them up. Say, will they get entangled in them again?*[36]

503-04 Having destroyed the strength
of their enemies, the *asuras*,
who were adepts in treacherous warfare,
and defeated them,
the *devas* forgot [the truth]
on account of the great arrogance
that their victory inspired in them.

505-08 In order to demonstrate to them
[the true degree of] their great power,
you appeared as a Yaksha
and showed that they did not have
the strength to move or burn
even a miniscule wisp of straw,
whereupon their pride was deflated,
and they felt ashamed.
Finally, to their astonishment,
you appeared to them as *Parasakti*,
she who possesses in abundance
the utmost heroic valour.

In the Kena Upanishad, *parts three and four,* Brahman *takes the form of Yaksha, a venerable elder, in order to demonstrate to a group of gods, who were glorying in a recent victory, that they had no power of their own. Jataveda, the god of fire, was asked by Yaksha to ignite a piece of straw, but he failed; Matarisva, the god of air, was asked to blow the straw away, and he too failed; then Indra, the king of the gods, approached Yaksha, who vanished and was replaced by Uma, Siva's consort. Indra asked Uma who the Yaksha was.*

She replied, 'It was Brahman. *You became elated at* Brahman's *victory.'*

The gods then understood that all their power derived from Brahman, *and that they had no individual power of their own.*

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[35] *Tiruvalluvar, The Kural*, tr. P. S. Sundaram, pub. Penguin, p. 82.
[36] *Ulladu Narpadu Kalivenba*, tr. by Sadhu Om and Michael James, *The Mountain Path* 1981, p. 219.

509-16 Whilst [some] distinguish between *sakti* and *Sivam*,

such as those ignorant outsiders
who cite numerous reasons,
stringing them together,
and arguing tenaciously,

to reveal the truth of your Self,

wherein these two are not separate,
but are eternally and identically one
in their real nature,

you danced as your consort looked on
in the Great Hall where you dwell as her Lord,
and in order for that *sakti* to be caught
within your vast immovable Self,
you appeared as the final truth of the formless,
the true savour, the non-dual absolute.

In Chidambaram, Sakti, Siva's consort, looks on as Siva performs his cosmic dance. In Arunachala, Sakti merged in Siva and disappeared into the motionless source. Though Sakti is manifest and active in Chidambaram, Bhagavan is stressing here that the events and traditions of both Chidambaram and Arunachala demonstrate that Siva and Sakti are always one. Bhagavan summarised this teaching in the first verse of Sri Arunachala Navamanimalai*:*

> *Though he is truly motionless by nature, in the court [of Chidambaram] Lord Siva dances before Sakti, thereby making her motionless. But know that [in Tiruvannamalai] Lord Arunachala shines triumphant, that Sakti having merged in his motionless form.*[37]

517-20 In order to accept Brahma and Vishnu's grand worship
on the night of Sivaratri in the month of Masi,
and to bestow your grace on them,
you rose up in the month of Margazhi,
on the day of the *ardra nakshetra*,
manifesting before them in the form
of a vast column of effulgent light,
revealing yourself to be
the most wondrous primal *lingam*, Arunachala.

These lines describe the original manifestation of Arunachala as a column of light and the subsequent occasion when Vishnu and Brahma, having realised Siva's superiority, first worshipped him. This is an expansion of a verse Bhagavan translated from Arunachala Mahatmyam*, the Sanskrit* purana *that celebrates and chronicles the greatness of Arunachala:*

> *The day on which the ancient and wonderful* linga *of Arunachala took shape is the star day of Ardra in the month of Mrigasira [Margazhi]. And the day on which Vishnu and the other* devas *worshipped the Lord manifesting within the effulgence is*

[37] *The Mountain Path*, 'The Power of Arunachala', 1982, p. 79.

the day of Maha Sivaratri.[38]

521-22 It is my great good fortune
that it has fallen to my lot
to stand in your presence
and sing repeatedly of your nature
in these many different ways.

523-26 For those who, thinking without thought,

> 'Whence does the "I" arise?'
> so that 'I' is destroyed within the Heart,
> wherein the 'I' does not arise,

have died to the five senses [and the mind]
and dwell steadfastly in the Heart,
their minds become *Sivam*,
the sanctum sanctorum.

527-28 Yours are the holy feet of *Sivam*,
the true, the divine,
which you clearly revealed to me
through the power of consciousness [*chit sakti*]
as I was whirling, through fear, in confusion
amongst imaginary appearances.

529-30 Our Lord! Know that, through all the seven births,
your feet of pure gold,
which are truly worthy to behold,
are the one refuge for us, your devotees!

531-36 '[Infinite] Eye, you who are the luminous space of supreme love,
a single drop from whose surging ocean
can bring peace to the beings of many diverse worlds!'
For those who declare in this way
and perform true austerities
by focussing their minds, meditating, singing praises,
and offering fulsome daily worship,
their minds become completely clear,
freed from the doubts that beset them
in their powerful delusion,
and through this, the world of liberation
will be nearer to them than this physical world.

The last portion of these lines is derived from Tirukkural, *verse 353:*

> *Behold the man who has freed himself from doubts and who has realised the truth;*
> *heaven is nearer to him than earth.*[39]

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[38] *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 'Sri Arunachala Mahatmyam', p. 80.
[39] *Tirukkural*, tr. V. V. S. Aiyer, pub. Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, 1984.

537-40 Dwelling in the pure space of the Lord’s grace,
witnessing the Lord’s dance of grace,
seated beneath the Lord’s feet of grace,
consuming the ambrosia of the Lord’s grace,

the demeaning birth that flourishes
by holding onto the body being at an end,

they will live in wholeness,
established in unending bliss.

‘Ramana Puranam’ concludes with two venba *verses, both written by Muruganar. One identifies the date it was given its first public reading, while the second is a concluding verse in which Muruganar praises his Guru. In the original Tamil the order of these verses is inverted.*

Know that it was in the auspicious year of *Iswara*,
on the star day of Kartikai in the month of Tai on a Tuesday,
that the ‘Ramana Puranam’,
which is imbued with the burgeoning radiance of true knowledge,
was first recited upon the summit of the red mountain [Arunachala]
in *kali venba* verse.[40]

Faultless *jnana*! You who are free of all attributes!
You who ruled me as my Guru
in the days when I knew nothing of true knowledge!
Wealth of grace who cleansed me of the delusion
in which I took the perishable body to be myself!
May I be granted the refuge of your holy feet!

[40] The Tamil calendar details given here correspond to 8th February 1938. *Kali venba* is the verse form in which the poem was written.

Siva Puranam

Salutation

1-5

Long live [the mantra] *Nama Sivaya*! Long live the feet of the Master!
Long live the feet that never, even for an eye's blink, leave my heart!
Long live the jewel among gurus, who in *Kokazhi*[1], bent me to his rule!
Long live the feet of him who, as the *Agamas*, sweetly dwells![2]
Long live the holy feet of the One, the Many, the Being Supreme!

6-10

Victory to the feet of the king, who destroyed my rising ego and made me his!
Victory to the jewelled anklets of Pinggakan,[3] who cuts off birth and death!
Victory to the lotus feet that are far from those who remain apart from him![4]
Victory to the king who rejoices amidst those who join their hands in prayer!
Victory to the feet of him who nobly raises up those whose heads bow low![5]

11-16

Praise to the feet of the Lord! Praise to the feet of our Father!
Praise to the feet of the Effulgent One! Praise to the ruddy feet of Sivan!
Praise to the holy feet of the Untainted One who abides in the love of his devotees!
Praise to the feet of the sovereign who sunders the fetter of delusive birth!
Praise to the feet of our God in Perunturai, where beauty abounds!
Praise to the mountain whose grace affords a bliss that never cloys!

[1] 'Kokazhi' means 'great port', a reference to Perunturai, where Manikkavachagar first encountered Siva.
[2] 'Sweetly dwells' may also be translated as 'brings me close'. The *Agamas* are Saiva scriptures that primarily explain how worship should be performed.
[3] 'Pinggakan' is a reference to Siva which denotes the unique components of his hair: the Ganga, the crescent moon, and the snake that is hidden in the matted locks.
[4] The phrase 'who remain apart from him' may also mean 'whose gaze is outward-turned'.
[5] 'Whose heads bow low,' is a reference to the necessity of the practice of humility, not physical obeisance.

Apology

17-25

As he who bears an eye upon his forehead
cast his gaze of compassion upon me,
I came to him, reached him,
worshipped the feet that, with beauty overflowing,
lie beyond the reach of thought.
And now, since Sivan dwells within my mind,
in order for my heart to rejoice
and my age-old karmas pass away,
I shall recount the ‘Siva Puranam’.
You whose greatness fills both heaven and earth!
Boundless One, transcending thought! Effulgent Light!
I, a man of wicked deeds, know not of any way
to praise your supreme glory.

The Succession of Births

26-31

As grass and plant, as worm and tree,
as wild beast of every description, as bird and snake,
as rock, man, ghoul and as one of the hosts of heaven,
as powerful *asura*, *rishi* and god,
as all this company of mobile and immobile forms,
I took birth and grew weary, my Master!

The *Jnana* Guru

32-40

Truly, I saw that day your golden feet, and liberation was mine.
Reality who, to save me, abides as *Omkaram* within my heart!
Immaculate One! Rider on the Bull!
When the *Vedas* called you ‘Sire!’
you rose up on high, plumbed the depths,
and spread far and wide as the Subtle One![6]
You are heat! You are cold! The One who dwells, unblemished, as the soul!
Coming in grace, such that all that’s false fled far away,
you are the true light that shines as knowledge of the truth!
Great Lord, sweet to me, devoid of knowledge as I am!
Right understanding that puts ignorance to flight!

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[6] The idea being conveyed is that even the *Vedas*, the ultimate books of knowledge, could not fathom or comprehend the state of Siva.

The Five Operations

41-48

Remaining ever uncreated, dimensionless and indestructible, all worlds
do you create, preserve, destroy and imbue with your grace,[7]
sending me forth [into birth], and [finally] initiating me into your service!
As close to me as fragrance [to a flower], far you are, yet near!
Beyond speech and mind you stand, the *Vedas'* Essence!
Our Lord! As when sugar, ghee and fresh-drawn milk are mixed together,
you abide, distilling nectar within the thoughts of glorious devotees,
cutting off entirely the births to which they are born!

Grace

49-61

Possessor of the Five Colours! Our Mighty Lord,
invisible to the hosts of heaven, even as they sang your praise!
Bound, I was, by powerful deeds, yet so that this dark delusion
that hid me in its covering shroud might be allayed,
you tied me with the strong cord of sin and virtue
so that I languished in a nine-doored hovel, oozing excrement,
a bag of filth and worms, covered by an outer skin,
as all five senses plagued me with their deceitful tricks.
Then, O Pure One, to my lowly self, who with straying mind,
lacked the virtuous nature that softens and inwardly melts,
merging with you in love, you granted your compassion.
True One! Coming in grace upon this earth,
you revealed to me your noble feet,
showing to me, worse, as I was, than any dog,
a compassionate nature that is more precious than a mother's!

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[7] Of the five divine operations – creation, preservation, destruction, veiling and grace – only four are given, but the fifth is clearly implied.

Praise

62-83

Flawless Effulgence, flowering with the brilliance of blossom in full bloom!
Lustrous One! Nectar-filled ambrosia! Lord of Sivapuram!
Learned One, who severs the fetter of bondage and protects us!
Great River of deep compassion who unmovingly abides,
granting in love your grace, so that wickedness dies within our hearts!
Ambrosia, for which the appetite cannot be sated! Great One, without limit!
Light that lies hidden with the hearts of those who do not seek you out!
You who abide as my very soul, melting [my heart] till it runs like water!
You who are without pleasure and pain, and yet possess them both!
Lover of those who love you! Radiance that is all things, and nothing at all!
You who are dense darkness! You whose greatness does not outwardly appear![8]
Primordial One, you are the middle and the end, and neither of these!
Lord and Father, who drew me to yourself, and made me yours!
Sight that, even for the minds of those who apprehend you
with the acute discrimination of true *jnana*, is hard indeed to see objectively![9]
Subtle consciousness that cannot be made more subtle!
Holy One who neither comes nor goes, nor unites with anything!
Guardian and Protector! Vast effulgence, that none can see!
Flooding river of delight! Father! As the light that illumines
all the wonders that are seen, as the unutterably subtle consciousness,
you are the certainty behind all the knowledge that variously manifests
in this mutable world! You are true knowledge absolute! Within my thoughts
you are the rare savour of ambrosia, welling up! My Lord and Possessor!

Petition

84-91

I can no longer bear to languish in this changeful frame of flesh.
For those who, purged of falsehood, have become the Truth,
praising you and worshipping you, crying ever and again 'O Hara! O, Our Lord!'
you have the power to strike off the fetters of the senses' deceitful abode
so that they return here no more to suffer their actions' fruit through birth!
King! Our Lord, dancing in deepest darkness your holy dance!
He of the southern Pandiyan Land! Dancer in Tillai's holy shrine!
Destroyer of the bond of birth that causes affliction!

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[8] The phrase 'You whose greatness does not outwardly appear' may also mean, 'The one with the distinction of having no birth'. Unlike Vishnu, whose recent avatars were born to human mothers, Siva is never born. He simply manifests, fully grown, whenever he is needed.

[9] These two lines (75-6) imply that once one has true knowledge, one no longer sees Siva as a separate object. One could also translate these lines to mean that the vision of Siva is a rare one that is only attained by those who have attained one-pointed *jnana*.

The Fruit of Reciting This Work

92-95

Those who, at his holy feet,
thus beseeching, speak of him who transcends speech,
and speaking know the truth of that whereof they speak,
will go to Sivapuram, there to dwell
beneath Lord Sivan's holy feet
as many bow their heads in homage deep.